

The Indian Church Commentaries

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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## GENERAL PREFACE

A FEW words of introduction are necessary to explain the general purpose of this series of commentaries. The work was commenced under the general supervision of Dr. A. M. Knight, Bishop of Rangoon, and Dr. G. A. Lefroy, Bishop of Lahore and afterwards Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan, acting as a committee appointed in accordance with a resolution of the Synod of Indian Bishops which met in 1900. On the retirement of Bishop Knight, the Rev. C. F. Andrews of the Cambridge Brotherhood, Delhi, was associated with Bishop Lefroy as General Editor. But in 1913 both of them resigned, and the Bishop of Lucknow took their place. In 1921 the Rev. L. E. Browne of Bishop's College, Calcutta, was associated with the Bishop of Lucknow as General Editor. The work of revision before publication is being left mainly in his hands, but a general episcopal supervision of the work will still be maintained.

It is hoped that these commentaries, while presenting a direct and scholarly interpretation of the New Testament, based upon the work of the great Western commentators, will, at the same time, contain such references to Eastern religious thought and life as may make them serviceable to both



Christian and non-Christian. It was the original intention that the series should be translated into the leading Indian vernaculars, and some translations have already appeared in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi. It is inevitable that in the interpretation of the New Testament there will be differences of opinion, and it has seemed best to allow these differences to appear in the series rather than to aim at a colourless uniformity. The final responsibility for the views taken of particular passages will rest with the individual contributors.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. HOW THE STORY WAS WRITTEN

*An imaginary dialogue showing in what sort of way the Acts of the Apostles came to be written, the sort of sources St. Luke had in composing his narrative, and the main contents of the book.*

*Scene* : St. Paul's hired house in Rome. Date about A.D. 60-62.

*Present* : Paul, Aristarchus, Mark, Luke, Demas.

*Demas* : Will the Lord come again after all? We had supposed that He would have returned long ago.

*Aristarchus* : Let us continue in the work, that when He comes we may be like faithful stewards ready to meet Him.

*Mark* : Do you not remember the words He said, which I have recorded in my book, that the gospel must first be preached to all the nations?

*Demas* : Have not all the nations heard yet? We have come to this Rome, this western Babylon; and Thomas has gone east to that older Babylon and perhaps beyond, though we have no news of what he has done. And yet the Lord delays.

*Paul* : There is Spain yet.<sup>1</sup> If I am released from this prison I must go there to carry the news to the utmost bounds of the West. Then perhaps He will

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 28.

come. Yet who knows ? He Himself said that of that day and of that hour no one knows except the Father, as you yourself recorded, Mark. There may be much work remaining for us to do of which we have no glimmering.

[*exit Demas.*]

*Aristarchus* : Your life of the Master, Mark, and yours Luke, are works whose influence is beyond all we can tell. Even the Greeks are reading those books and seeking to learn more. Cannot someone write another book to tell us of the wonderful things that Jesus is doing now, how He is choosing out for Himself an elect people from every nation under heaven ? Won't you do it, Mark ?

*Mark* : I am no writer. You know I wrote that story of the Master, and put down all I could learn of the things He said and did, and our brethren are reading it because they love the Lord. But those who are outside will not read it : they call it barbaric Greek. Luke has command of the language of Demosthenes and Plato. Let him be the historian of the deeds of the Holy Spirit.

*Paul* : Yes let Luke do it ; but not too much high-flown Greek, my son. You remember how I tried to meet the philosophers at Athens on their own ground, and they would not hear. Not many wise with human wisdom are called. Our gospel is for those that are perishing. Write it simply, as you wrote your life of Jesus, that all who know the common Greek may understand ; and if there be any philosophers who have the mind of Christ, they will not be ashamed to read your story.

*Luke* : How shall I get the information ? When I wrote my life of Jesus I had the earlier life that our brother Mark had written, and that other life you know, and for the early days at Nazareth I had the story which Philip's saintly daughters told me, which they had learnt from the blessed Mother of our Lord. But of these later days there is no written history—no, nothing at all except my diary of our travels. Would that Peter were still in Rome to relate to me the story of the early days in Jerusalem !

*Mark* : I remember many things that Peter told me of those great days ; and here I have some notes, roughly written it is true, by an early disciple, in our Jewish language which they call Aramaic. These I can translate for you.

*Luke* : Shall we not rather wait to gather fuller information ? Perchance someone may come soon and tell us of the progress of the gospel in Alexandria. Perchance in a few years Thomas may return, and we shall know whether the rumour is true that he has travelled to distant India, that eastern edge of the world from whence came Solomon's ivory and peacocks.

*Paul* : No, the time presses. Here we are all together, Mark and you and I. Soon we may be separated, by the great seas or by the narrow stream of death. Let us get to work while we can. A complete history it can never be. As our brother John has so often said, when we pressed him to write a book, if all were told, of the Lord's doings in Palestine alone, the libraries of Athens and Alexandria, even the whole world, would not contain

the books that should be written. But such a record it will be of the mighty works of God, that all the world will know that the risen and ascended Christ is with us, and that the promised dispensation of the Spirit has come.

*Enter Theophilus, a Roman knight.*

*Theophilus* : All hail !

*Paul* : All hail, and peace !

*Theophilus* : Are you Paul, the Jewish teacher ?

*Paul* : Jewish still, but more than Jewish now. To Jews a Jew, to Greeks a Greek, to Romans a Roman citizen, to all men a brother, and above all a bond-servant of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, I am Paul. And you ? What Roman knight pays a visit to a prisoner under trial ?

*Theophilus* : My name's Theophilus, a name implying that I love God, though till of late I should have said 'A lover of the gods' ; for only now do I begin to learn of the true God. I heard of you first through Seneca the Stoic,<sup>1</sup> before whose brother Gallio—'sweet Gallio' they call him—you stood at Corinth, and who acquitted you of charges levelled at you by your fellow-Jews. And now, these three weeks past, I have heard more fully of your teaching, and of one Chrestus<sup>2</sup> whom you preach, from a slave of mine, a Jewish boy. From him I have learnt your whereabouts and your present plight. Tell me of yourself and of your teaching.

<sup>1</sup> One of Seneca's letters was addressed to Theophilus. It is only a conjecture that this might be the Theophilus of Acts.

<sup>2</sup> So the name seems first to have been misreported in Rome.



*Paul* : Of myself there is little to tell. My trial is almost over ; my acquittal is in sight. But the trial of the world is yet to come. For God has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained even Jesus Christ, whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead.

*Luke* : Most excellent Theophilus, it has been granted to me of God to write in few words the story of the life of our Lord Christ ; and here I have a copy freshly written upon parchment, written in a fair hand. If it would please you to accept of it you might know therefrom the certainty concerning the things wherein you were instructed.

*Theophilus* : Not only will I most gladly accept of your bounty, but I will cause to be made by my scribe twelve copies of this book, that others also may learn of these matters.

*Luke* : It is also in my mind to write another book relating some of the wonderful works that are being wrought in these days by the Spirit of Christ since He was taken up from amongst us.

*Theophilus* : That also you shall give me, and I will cause copies to be made. For verily this new teaching touches my heart more deeply than our own philosophies, and speaks of mysteries more wonderful than any of the oriental cults that have yet come to us. I may not tarry now, and so, farewell.

*Luke* : Fareweil, most excellent Theophilus.

*Paul* : The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, my child.

[*exit Theophilus.*]

*Mark :* A rich man who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ! Surely the Lord has sent him that his wealth may be used for the furtherance of the gospel.

*Luke :* And now to work. Let us at once gather up the threads with which the garment is to be weaved. First I must begin with the Ascension of the Lord. In the former book I only briefly mentioned it ; but here I must make clear that that day marked the last appearance of the Lord.

*Paul :* Yes, the last in bodily form. But not the last vision ; for I myself saw Him truly, and many others see Him even now with eyes of faith.

*Mark :* You remember how He said He would return in the clouds. That is how He departed, and Peter told me that angels stood by at the Ascension and spoke of His return in the clouds.

*Luke :* How many disciples were there in those days ?

*Paul :* Chief amongst them were the Eleven ; and the brethren of the Lord, who had been converted to believe on Him (so James told me) when they saw Him on the Cross.

*Luke :* I know the blessed Mother and the other women were of the company. But how many were the disciples all told ?

*Paul :* That is hard to say, as no one knew who were His followers then. He appeared once to more than five hundred all at once.<sup>1</sup> But the upper room where they all used to assemble—I have seen it with

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

my own eyes—could not have held more than six score at most.

*Luke* : What happened to Judas Iscariot ?

*Mark* : Some say he hanged himself in remorse ; but this Aramaic booklet says that he bought a field with the thirty pieces of silver, and that his first visit to his ill-gotten possession was as dramatic as Ahab's visit to Naboth's vineyard, for he stumbled on a rock and fell headlong, and was ripped open and died. The field is described in this book as Haqal Damā, Blood Field. All I know for certain is what Peter told me, that the Holy Spirit chose Matthias to fill the vacant place.

*Aristarchus* : Holy Spirit ! Yes indeed. I saw it all, unbeliever as I was then, for that year I had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> I was standing in the street which was full of people, when the disciples came rushing out of their house. Never have I seen men more excited. 'The Spirit of the Lord is come !' they cried, 'with fire and tempest as of old !' Then torrents of words poured forth from their lips. I don't know what they were saying, nor even what language it was, for I only know Greek and a little Aramaic ; but there were Phrygians and Babylonians and all sorts of people in the crowd, and many of them burst out with the same enthusiasm as if they understood the words, so it must have been in their languages. Some of us thought they were drunk,

<sup>1</sup> There is no historical evidence for this, but Luke may have heard the story from many who could give such an account as this.

and so did I then, but when I recollect how the enthusiasm spread to all the crowd I feel sure they were praising God in all the languages of the world. Then Peter stood up and made a speech in Aramaic with a strong Galilean accent that made it more difficult to follow. His face was lit up with the most wonderful light, and I wished I could understand all he said. I know he declared that Jesus was risen from the dead, and that the Holy Spirit had come as the prophet Joel had foretold. When he had finished, most of the crowd were baptized then and there ; but I was not so readily persuaded, and heard nothing more of the gospel till Paul came to Thessalonica.

*Luke* : Mnason, a Cypriote, <sup>1</sup> told me much the same story as you have told. He was there that day, and was one of the crowd that were baptized. He said, I remember, that some three thousand were baptized that day.

*Paul* : Andronicus and Junias were there too, and were baptized a few weeks later. <sup>2</sup>

*Luke* : I have heard from many of those early days. It was, they say, not the number of the converts that was amazing so much as their unity. A few days previously they had been Jews from many lands, of different sects, always wrangling. Now the one thing that was prominent was their fellowship. In doctrine they all followed the apostles' teaching ; they were united in daily prayers, and every first day

<sup>1</sup> Described in Acts xxi. 16 as ' an early disciple '.

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul says of them in Rom. xvi. 7, ' They were in Christ before me.'

of the week met together wherever they could for the Lord's own service, the Breaking of Bread. For a while their unity even extended to their property, so that all their resources were pooled.

*Mark* : Yes, my cousin Barnabas actually sold up his land and placed the proceeds at the disposal of the disciples. But after that it is said that one or two disciples pretended to do the same and used deception, and some terrible fate befell them. I can give you details from the Aramaic book if you like. It seems to have made a great impression on the Christians in Jerusalem. Peter used to say it was regarded as such a dreadful sin to be untrue to the fellowship, it seemed like blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

*Luke* : Did Peter regard the death of those sinners as a miracle worked by him ?

*Mark* : No, rather as a judgment from God. But he did work miracles. Once he and John together were the means of bringing strength of limb to a man born lame. That gave Peter a great opportunity of preaching about Christ, and he explained the sufferings and death of Christ as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the Servant of the Lord. The rulers of the Jews were very angry, because on them was put the blame of the sufferings of the righteous Servant of the Lord ; but they could not punish Peter and John because it was so well known that a real miracle of mercy had been performed. First they threatened them, and then, when more miracles of healing were reported, put them in prison. In the night an angel came and freed them from prison, and they were found preaching next morning as usual. At this the

authorities were in a state of great alarm, fearing that God was about to bring their evil deeds to judgment. Indeed so alarmed were they that they even meditated executing Peter and some of the other apostles without a trial, and would have done so but for the intervention of Rabbi Gamaliel.

*Paul* : He was a good man, my revered master, Rabban Gamaliel. My heart's desire and my supplication to God was for him that he might be saved. For I bear him witness that he had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. <sup>1</sup>

*Luke* : It must have been about that time that there was a threatened split when some of the Grecian Jews complained that their poor widows were not getting a fair share ; but so strong was the sense of fellowship that they appointed seven men to take charge of the matter, and every one of them was a Grecian Jew. This I had from Philip who was one of the Seven. Another was Stephen the first martyr.

*Paul* : Yes, Stephen, the first martyr. I will tell you all about him ; and you must write down every word of it, for I was his murderer. I held the coats of those who stoned him. He argued with us in the synagogue, and when we were worsted in argument we determined on his death. I can remember to this day his burning words, showing how all the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled in Jesus ; and his face, fiery, determined, and yet so full of peace, like some heavenly being ; and his last words praying to God to

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 1, 2.



forgive us. And God answered that prayer, at any rate for me. I was the wolf then, and I can scarce bear to recall how I scattered the frightened sheep. All of them fled from Jerusalem except the apostles. The apostles knew we were afraid to touch them, because the angel had delivered them before ; and we knew in our hearts that they were under God's protection.

*Luke* : I remember Philip saying that it was owing to that persecution that he started preaching. He went down to Samaria and had such success there that Peter and John went down to lay their hands on Philip's converts that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was in Samaria that Philip met the magician Simon.

*Paul* : Magic is one of the subtlest enemies of the truth, but where truth and magic meet magic is brought to nought. At Salamis in Cyprus a sorcerer withstood the gospel, and was brought to blindness. At Ephesus seven sons of Sceva dared to play magic with the name of our blessed Lord, and were greatly discomfited, insomuch that magic was utterly discredited, and many people committed their magical books to the flames. I wonder what happened to Simon.

*Luke* : I know not, though some say his conversion to Christianity was a fraud, and that he still practises his wicked arts in Samaria. Philip was the means of bringing in another convert, a faithful one, an Ethiopian eunuch. Philip heard him reading from Isaiah about the Servant of the Lord ; and remembering how Stephen had proved that Jesus was the

Servant of the Lord, he explained the scripture as referring to our Lord; and the eunuch believed and was baptized—the first Negro Christian. What other conversions were there in those days?

*Paul*: It was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> You have often heard me speak of the outward circumstances of my conversion: the walk to Damascus, the light, the sound, my blindness, my baptism; but what I saw and heard no words can tell. The wolf's heart was torn from me, and a new heart was given me. I had the will at once to preach the gospel, but I had to learn afresh in the school of Christ, for the great Rabban's lessons were of little avail in presenting the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus.

*Mark*: In the years of peace following that persecution many mighty works were done. My Aramaic book relates how Peter healed a man named Aeneas who had been paralysed eight years, and raised to life a holy woman Tabitha. And we all know the story of his first Gentile convert Cornelius.

*Luke*: I have heard it before, but tell it again. Why did he doubt whether Gentiles should become Christians?

*Mark*: He explained it all at the great Council at Jerusalem. Barnabas told me. He never doubted that Gentiles were to be received as Christians, for the Master had said that the gospel was to be preached

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 15, 16.

throughout the world. But He had also said that no jot or tittle of the Law should fail, and Peter thought it meant that all must be circumcised first. He thought the Law forbade him to interdine with uncircumcised Gentiles, and only did so when the vision on the house-top revealed the meaning of the Lord's words that nothing from without entering into a man can defile him. Step by step he was led on : first the vision, proving that he should enter into Cornelius' company ; then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the same fervent utterances which had marked the day of Pentecost, proving that baptism must be given to Cornelius ; and then finally the testimony of Paul and Barnabas at the Council proving to him that it was a universal rule, that Christ was Lord of all, and that the gospel was for all alike, even for those who had departed this life.<sup>1</sup>

*Luke* : When did the real spread of the faith among the Gentiles begin ?

*Mark* : It was at Antioch, one of the results of the scattering in the great persecution. Some of the Jews of the Dispersion did not observe the strict rules of the Law ; and when trouble seemed likely to arise they sent my cousin Barnabas to control affairs. Under his guidance the movement went forward.

*Paul* : He fetched me back from Tarsus to join in the movement, and things went so well that the Gentile-Christian community got the same spirit of fellowship which had marked the early days in Jerusalem, and when Agabus foretold a famine in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 6.

Jerusalem they collected money, bought corn, and sent us to Jerusalem with it.

*Mark* : It was then that I first met with you and joined your company. You remember how James the son of Zebedee was murdered by Herod, and Peter was arrested and was delivered by an angel. He came straight to our house, for he was a great friend of our family, and then went to Cæsarea till Herod was dead.

*Paul* : Soon after our return from Jerusalem with Mark, the Holy Spirit, working through the Church, separated us for missionary work. We started out for Cyprus, the home of Barnabas.

*Mark* : I did not at all understand the missionary call at that time ; and I had no intention of going beyond my cousin's home, so when we touched at Pamphylia I took the next coasting vessel back to the Holy Land.

*Paul* : Mark's departure was a great loss to us. Soon afterwards I fell ill with fever so badly that the only thing was to hasten up to the hills into the Province of Galatia. I well remember my first sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, when, shaking with ague,<sup>1</sup> I preached Jesus proved by the resurrection to be the Messiah, and justification from sin through faith in Him. The Jews were quite ready to accept this message, till next sabbath when we were preaching the same message to Gentiles and Jews alike ; then the Jews turned on us, and raised up a persecution, so that we had to flee to Iconium. The

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 13.

same thing happened at Iconium, though we were able to stay longer there. From there we fled to Lystra.

*Timothy (coming into the room at that instant) :* Are you recalling the early days? Let me tell the story of Lystra. I saw it better than most, because I mixed freely with both Jews and Greeks. On the sabbath I was with my mother and grandmother<sup>1</sup> in the synagogue when the strangers Paul and Barnabas first appeared, and we were greatly struck by their interpretation of the Scriptures. Soon afterwards I was accompanying my father on his way back from the temple of Zeus. On the other side of an open space where three roads met lay a wayside beggar, a cripple, who always sat there the whole day. Paul and Barnabas were passing by at the same time, and we were surprised to see them conversing quietly with the beggar. We stood still, wondering what there could be in common between the travellers and this Lycaonian beggar, when suddenly Paul's voice rang out loud, loud enough to be heard quite distinctly from where we were standing, 'Stand upright on thy feet.' Almost before the words were finished there was a tremendous shriek of joy from the beggar, and there he was jumping and dancing round the apostles, excitedly waving in the air the mat on which he used to sit; and then, as the strangers walked on their way, he composed himself and walked quietly behind them as a servant or a disciple. My father and I ran across the square to see the man, and if possible to examine his legs, because they used to be like withered

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 5.

sticks ; and as we ran others ran too, till quite a crowd had gathered. All were shouting together that the gods had come down to earth ; Paul who had uttered the word which healed the man must be Hermes, the messenger of the gods ; and Barnabas the silent one must be Zeus. The priest of Zeus was quick to realize his duty, and in almost no time had brought garlanded oxen for a sacrifice. All this time Paul and Barnabas had been bewildered, thinking that the people were shouting in thanksgiving for the miracle, but not dreaming that they were taken for gods. For all the talk of the crowd was in the Lycaonian language. But when I saw what was going to happen I pushed my way through the crowd and whispered to Barnabas in Greek that the priest was going to offer sacrifice to him. Immediately Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes, and sprang among the crowd, saying, ' We are men, like yourselves,' and then when they had quieted the crowd they stood up and preached that men should turn from idols and vanity and worship the living God. After that the crowd dispersed, except for some of us who stayed behind to hear more of the new faith. A few days later the cripple, and my mother and grandmother, and myself, and a few others were baptized. But Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed in pursuit of Paul, and raised up a riot and stoned him. He was fortunately only stunned, and soon recovered well enough to leave the city and go to Derbe. Soon the apostles were back again, encouraging and helping us ; and it was on their third visit a little later that I left my mother and went with them.



*Paul* : It was in the middle of our work in Galatia that the great issue was faced of the position of Gentiles in the Church. For while we were resting at Antioch in Syria certain people came from James in Jerusalem and insisted that all Gentiles should be circumcised and accept the Jewish Law before baptism ; and some of the Christians of Antioch sided with them ; and even Barnabas wavered. Peter was at Antioch at that time, and sided also with them. After much dissension it was decided that Peter, Barnabas and I should go up to Jerusalem with some of the other brethren to settle the question. With me I took Luke's brother Titus,<sup>1</sup> then recently converted from heathenism, whom I steadfastly refused to circumcise. (It was quite different with Timothy, because he was a Jew on his mother's side). At the Council Peter explained his position as you have already heard, and Barnabas and I told of the wondrous works that God had wrought among the Gentiles, and we were able to point to Titus as one saved from heathenism by the grace of God. Against God's works they could say nothing ; and James summed up the feeling of the meeting that we should have full liberty to carry on the work. Only they requested us to insist on the elementary rules of morality, which of course we always did. We received from their hands a decree embodying these opinions. Thus once more the fellowship was maintained in the Church, and none but a few Jews who had imperfectly understood the gospel ever again attempted to thwart the purposes of

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Cor. viii. 18, xii. 18.

God for the Gentiles. Then we continued with the work in Galatia, only this time I took Silas, for Barnabas insisted on taking Mark. So they returned to work in Cyprus, while we went back to Galatia. From Galatia we thought of working in Asia, but the Holy Spirit of Jesus reserved that Province for a later time. Then we thought of Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit was intending that that Province should be evangelized by Peter, as it is now. Thus we were led towards Macedonia, and of that I need say nothing, for Luke himself was with us.

*Luke* : Yes, I shall never forget how I met with you at Troas, and told you that the doors of Macedonia stood wide open ; and how you were strengthened in your resolve by a vision in the night, and hastened to cross over till we reached Philippi. It was there that Lydia was converted, and the evil spirit cast out of a sooth-saying girl. Shall I ever forget the night when Paul and Silas were cast in prison, and we waited outside praying, and heard the hymns they sang in the darkness ? Then the earthquake, and the panic, the conversion of the jailor and his household ; in the morning the humiliation of the praetors when they realized they might be called to account for their illegal scourging of a Roman citizen ; and then our farewell to the apostles as they went on their way to Thessalonica.

*Aristarchus* : It was then that I first met Paul, and began to understand the gospel. For three weeks they taught us, and many of us believed, including good Jason. But the faithless Jews attacked the house, and Jason narrowly escaped harm. We sent

Paul and Silas on to Beroea, where we heard they had a good reception, until the Jewish rabble from Thessalonica pursued them and drove them thence.

*Timothy* : Not all of us at once. A faithful escort conducted Paul to Athens, but we, Silas and I, remained a few weeks in Beroea.

*Paul* : Such was the first evangelization of Macedonia—a hurried casting of the seed as we fled from place to place—and yet what harvest is reaped already ! And then my first visit to Achaia. How, in the old days in Tarsus, I had longed to sit at the feet of the philosophers of Athens and learn of them ! Now at length I was come, but not to learn from them. I came, alone, with a philosophy that none of them had dreamed of, a wisdom from on high : my task to teach and not to learn. I showed my knowledge of their poets, my appreciation of their search for God, and then I told our news. But oh ! the dull ears of the wise ! They thought I was offering two new deities to their pantheon—Jesus and Anastasis. Sad-den I left Athens, with the comfort of Dionysius and Damaris and one or two others ; and went to Corinth, determined henceforth to leave alone the wisdom of the world and to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.<sup>1</sup>

*Timothy* : When we, Silas and I, came, Paul was already settled at Corinth living with Aquila and Priscilla who had left Rome under Claudius' edict. Again the Jews opposed themselves, and we turned to the Greeks ; for in so large a city the Jews were

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.

not powerful enough to drive us out. Once they tried to get Paul condemned by Gallio, but found that Roman Law was indifferent to Jewish religious quarrels. Moreover Paul had been encouraged by a vision to stay a long while at Corinth.

*Paul* : After that time we began the work in Asia.

*Luke* : At once ?

*Paul* : I paid a visit to Jerusalem first, touching at Ephesus on the way, and returned through the Galatian country and Phrygia to Ephesus. Previous to my arrival Priscilla and Aquila, who had gone to Ephesus from Corinth with me, met Apollos who had only received John's baptism, and received him into the Church. On my arrival I also found about twelve of John's disciples, who had not even heard that baptism by the Holy Spirit was now given. They also received Christian baptism, and the gift of tongues accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For three months I taught in the synagogue, but after that, owing again to Jewish opposition, I taught in the school of one Tyrannus.

*Aristarchus* : It was after that that the great riot occurred. It all started through the silversmiths' fear that they would lose their trade in idols. There was a tremendous uproar. Gaius and I were seized and dragged into the theatre. Paul wanted to enter the theatre and make a speech, but the other disciples dissuaded him. Then a Jew named Alexander wanted to get up to prove that the Jews had nothing to do with the Christians. But they would not hear him ; and for two hours all yelled continuously, 'Great Artemis of the Ephesians !' The riot was finally

quelled by a conciliatory speech by the town clerk. Paul had previously intended to visit Macedonia and Achaia again after a while ; but after the riot it was unsafe to stay, so we hastened his departure.

*Luke* : It was then that Titus <sup>1</sup> and I rejoined the company. For after passing through Macedonia to Achaia and spending three months there, Paul returned through Macedonia with representatives of all the churches on their journey to Jerusalem with the great thank-offering. We joined them at Philippi. At Troas on the first day of the week we were celebrating the Breaking of Bread from late night till early morning, and a young man named Eutychus fell from the window. They thought he was dead, but Paul brought him alive again, and when the service was over we departed. There was no time to visit Ephesus, so Paul sent for the elders to meet us at Miletus, and there told them that imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem. It was an affecting scene, that last farewell. Sailing from thence we reached Tyre, and came to Cæsarea where we stayed with Philip, one of the Seven, and from thence to Jerusalem accompanied by our host Mnason. No sooner had we arrived in Jerusalem than James called a meeting of all the elders to meet us ; and it was reported how faithfully we had kept to the conditions laid down at the great Council. In order to prove the strength of our position Paul agreed to go through certain purificatory ceremonies in the temple with four believing Jews. Unfortunately the rumour spread abroad that one of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 6.

the four was Trophimus, a Gentile Christian from Ephesus, and a riot occurred in which Paul would have been killed but for the intervention of the Roman chiliarch. As Paul was being led away he craved permission to address the crowd. He spoke in Aramaic, and related the events leading up to his own conversion and his mission to the Gentiles. At the word 'Gentiles' the uproar began again. The chiliarch would have examined him by scourging, but on learning that he was a Roman citizen decided to bring him before the High Priest and the chief priests. At that council Paul claimed to be standing for the Pharisaic hope of the resurrection, which started a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

*Paul* : The Lord stood by me that night and gave me strength for the trials that were to follow.

*Luke* : Next day the Jews conspired to assassinate Paul, but the plot was revealed to the chiliarch, who straightway sent Paul by night to Cæsarea to appear before Felix. We followed the next day, and were in Cæsarea in time to hear the charges brought by the High Priest through the mouth of a professional orator. The charges contained nothing definite, so Paul in his defence maintained in general terms his innocence, and once more proclaimed the truth of the resurrection. For two years Felix kept him in prison, hoping in vain for a bribe to release him. When Festus succeeded Felix there was another so-called trial, and Paul, weary of these long-drawn out proceedings, and knowing that no justice would be done there, appealed to Cæsar, knowing that in that way his long-felt wish to reach Rome would be



fulfilled. Festus then brought Paul before king Agrippa, in order to have some definite charge to refer to Cæsar. Paul, in his speech before Agrippa, repeated the story of his conversion, and claimed to be only preaching what the Scriptures foretold; and Agrippa agreed that Paul was innocent. I have careful notes of all these speeches in my diary.

*Aristarchus* : When the time for embarking was settled, the centurion in charge was most considerate, not only allowing Luke and me to accompany him in the guise of servants, but at Sidon allowed Paul to land, and in the shipwreck saved his life from the soldiers who would have killed him.

*Paul* : Yes, and at Melita also the chief man showed us no little kindness. But yet, though I had been shipwrecked three times before, this was the most dreadful experience, and I was only buoyed up by the presence of the Lord.

*Luke* : Every detail of that voyage is recorded in my diary, and shall be written in my book, that all may know how great things the apostles of the Lord willingly suffered for his sake, and how He delivers His chosen out of all afflictions.

*Paul* : All our sorrows were forgotten when, in the neighbourhood of Rome, we were welcomed by a party of the brethren. In Rome I was first put in a separate room with the soldier that guarded me. There I was allowed to receive the chief of the Jews. But when they closed their ears I was compelled to tell them that the gospel was for the Gentiles. After that I was allowed to live in this my own hired house. Daily I preach the gospel that the kingdom



of God is at hand. See how the providence of God has carried the gospel out from Jerusalem to Judæa, Samaria, and almost to the ends of the earth, as the Lord said. The gospel has free course and is glorified. Hasten thy coming, Lord Jesus.

## II. THE TRUTH OF THE STORY

Probably few who read this commentary have ever doubted that Acts is a true story. It corresponds with the Christian life as we have experienced it. Those who are familiar with the experiences of converts from darkness to the light, who are acquainted with the lives of men like Sundar Singh, who know the joy and ecstasy that a turning to Christ produces in a convert's life, find no difficulty in entering into the spirit of the Apostolic Age. But for two reasons it is most desirable that the truth of the story should be established beyond all question. The first is that Moslems charge the Christians with having perverted the Scriptures. The second reason is that Hindu sacred books are full of myths and fables, of unhistorical avatars on which Hinduism is based; and it is necessary to show that Christianity is based on actual historical facts which can be proved beyond the possibility of doubt.

For those who are unacquainted with the thoroughgoing methods of historical research it may be well to explain that there are not many events in past history which can be proved by absolutely contemporary evidence. It is only occasionally that we are able to get inscriptions made at the time, such

for instance as those of Sennacherib, of Darius I, and of Asoka. Even in such cases we have to allow for the possibility of exaggeration, just as we sometimes doubt the statements of the newspaper with regard to the events of yesterday. But for the majority of ancient events we are dependent upon the testimony of histories, written often hundreds of years after the event. And further in most cases those histories are only preserved in two or three manuscripts written many centuries later and full of numerous errors and alterations which have accumulated in the process of copying the history over and over again. It is hard for us to realize this to-day, because when a book is published hundreds of absolutely identical copies are turned out at once by means of the printing press. If however we wish to obtain the original text of any book written, say, two thousand years ago, we shall probably only find a small number of manuscripts and none of them more than a thousand years old. By comparison of these manuscripts we obtain a text which is still very far from what the author wrote, and there is no possibility by any means of attaining any greater accuracy. We may safely assert that if the modern Hindu or Moslem was bold enough to apply the methods of historical research to the origins of his religion he would be unable to continue to adhere to it.

In the case of the books of the New Testament, including the Acts of the Apostles, the number of manuscripts runs into many hundreds, the earliest dating from the fourth century, thus providing incomparably better evidence for the text than there is

for other ancient writings. Naturally such a vast number of manuscripts show many differences in the text, but the number of manuscripts is so great that their relationship into families can be worked out. In the case of the Acts we are able from the families of manuscripts to show that in the second century A.D. there were two distinct types of text in use. Naturally the evidence of the manuscripts themselves could not give us any information further back than the fourth century, the date when the oldest of them were written ; but we have two kinds of earlier evidence, the evidence of versions into Latin and Syriac which were made in the second century (though the actual Latin and Syriac manuscripts are much later and we only have the Syriac version of Acts in a later revised form), and the evidence of early Christian writers who quote the Acts. It may be interesting to notice that one quotation from the Acts actually comes from the first century, in the Epistle of Clement of Rome to Corinth which was written in A.D. 96. Of the two types of text of Acts which were current in the second century, one, which is found in the fourth century manuscripts, is fairly well represented by the English Revised Version. This is by far the better text of the two, though in some places it is no doubt at fault. The other type of text, generally called the Bezan text, shows a great many differences. Most of the differences are additions or alterations made by some editor, probably in the middle of the second century, with a view to simplifying or explaining the text. Such additions and alterations are of no value to us, and make it more

difficult for us to find what is of real value in the Bezan text. If we could strip the Bezan text of all these accretions we should then have a second type of text of about equal value with the text of the fourth century manuscripts. As it is not always possible to strip the accretions from the Bezan text we shall most frequently follow the fourth century manuscripts as the English Revised Version generally does. In a few cases the Bezan text provides readings which are probably to be preferred to the other text. Such readings will be referred to when they occur ; but no reference will be made in this commentary to the great mass of divergencies of the Bezan text which can lay little claim to being original.

It should be clearly understood that such uncertainties as still remain as to the true text of the Acts are not such as affect any doctrinal point or any serious question of the history. The evidence we have, not only proves the Acts to have existed at an early date, but also shows that no divergencies from the text were known to any early writers which are not also represented in some of the manuscripts we possess. This completely disposes of the Moslem accusation that the Scriptures have been perverted by Christians.

It must not be supposed that the study of the manuscripts, or textual criticism as it is called, is an easy matter. It is a subject on which numerous books have been written in English and German. If a list of the more important manuscripts were given here, with a few pages of discussion on their merits, it would give an altogether wrong idea of the subject. Those who wish to study it must begin with the text

books specially devoted to textual criticism, and will then be in a position to make use of the masses of textual information that have been collected for all parts of the New Testament. For the purpose of this commentary the short summary of results here given is sufficient.

When we have got a text like that of the English Revised Version which approximately represents the Acts as originally written, we still have not answered the question whether Acts is true history. The importance of the Acts of the Apostles for the truth of Christianity is so great that the book has been the subject of the most searching criticism from friend and foe alike. In the middle of last century some of the acutest minds in Germany were convinced that the Acts was written late in the second century to patch up a peace between the Pauline and the Jewish parties which were thought to have been in bitter conflict in the early Church. Such a theory, if true, would have seriously affected the truth of Christianity. The theory was pursued relentlessly, till one fact after another emerged which contradicted it, until finally the theory was universally abandoned. The most remarkable event in the history of criticism was the conversion of Sir W. M. Ramsay to a belief in the accuracy of Acts. He had earlier in life assumed that the critical views about Acts then current were correct, and that therefore Acts was a late book of no historical value. The names of officials like the 'Asiarchs' of Ephesus, and the geographical terms used, were laughed at as the inventions of an author living far removed from the times. When however

Ramsay went to Asia Minor and carried out his explorations there, he was struck by the accuracy of Acts in all matters of local detail, and he became the staunchest defender of the early date and historical accuracy of the Acts. Thus the effect of the storm of criticism, through which the book has passed, has not been merely to leave it where it was before. It has had the result of certifying the Acts as a first-class historical work, so that in future it would be exceedingly difficult for any one to cast any doubts upon it.

### III. WHAT THE ACTS DOES NOT TELL US

Every one who studies the Acts of the Apostles is struck by the fact that St. Luke only gives some aspects of the Church History of the Apostolic Age. It has been always noticed that he tells us almost nothing about the activities of the Eleven except St. Peter. Later traditions said that they all went out on missionary journeys. St. Luke gives us no information by which we can prove or disprove such traditions. In the later part of his book he is dealing with St. Paul and his information is no doubt either that of an eyewitness, or the first-hand evidence which he gained as a companion of St. Paul. For the earlier part of his book his information may have come through various acquaintances, such as Aristarchus and the daughters of Philip. But the important thing is that he transmitted such information as he received, with no pretence that he was recounting a full history of the Apostolic Age. We find for instance in the latter half of the Acts a notice of some

disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus. For all we could learn from the Gospels or from the earlier chapters of the Acts we should never have guessed that the disciples of John continued to exist as a religious body. But this one notice, inserted apparently by mere chance, tells us that the movement did not cease with the death of the Baptist, and that his disciples while mixing freely with the Christians were not well acquainted with them. It would have added greatly to our understanding of the Christian movement if we had been supplied with fuller information about these disciples of St. John. For it is very probable that they had a wide universalistic outlook. According to St. Luke's account in his Gospel, St. John the Baptist said that God was able to raise up children to Abraham out of the stones. His disciples then most probably were equally ready to find non-Jews in the Kingdom of God; and they too like him probably preached to people excommunicate from Israel like tax-gatherers, and foreigners like Roman soldiers. If St. Luke had had such definite information about the followers of the Baptist he surely would have inserted it as illustrating the universalistic tendency in the Christian Church. His silence can only be attributed to ignorance.

There is another gap in the history of the early Church. St. Luke tells us next to nothing about the Christians in Galilee. However highly we may value the historicity of the Fourth Gospel, we cannot help believing from the Synoptic Gospels that our Lord spent much time teaching and working in Galilee



and that He gained there many followers. Among these were all or most of the inner circle, the Twelve Disciples. According to the Acts this inner circle, now reduced to eleven, resided in Jerusalem for some time after the Ascension and formed the centre from which radiated out the ever wider spreading gospel. But what about the other Galileans, the thousands who ran round the lake to listen to the Master, the thousands who received food at His hands? All that the Acts records for us is in a single verse (ix. 31), where mention is made in general terms of the growth of the Church of 'Judæa, Galilee and Samaria', a summary in other words of the general expansion of the Church in Palestine. The explanation of St. Luke's silence is perhaps not very difficult. When he wished to gather information about the Christians in Jerusalem, he was dealing with a definitely organized body of people with officials in authority, with treasurers in charge of common funds, possibly with St. James as president. St. Luke happened to learn about important events connected with Stephen, Philip and Peter; but, more than that, he was able to get some sort of account of the infant church in Jerusalem because it was a definitely organized movement. But if St. Luke ever made enquiries about the Galilean Christians there would have been nothing to tell. The outstanding figures were the nearer disciples, who had left their homes and settled in Jerusalem. The other believers, men and women who had listened to such teaching as the Sermon on the Mount, who were trying to put it into practice in their lives, were not at all an

organized community, but individuals scattered throughout the villages. We can well believe that many a touching tale might have been told of holy influence, and souls won for Christ by these individuals. But there was nothing for the historian to catch hold of, at least for a historian who was trying with bold strokes of the brush to give the main outlines of a great Movement. We might conjecture that some Galileans helped to carry the gospel to Antioch, as well as the Judæan Christians who were scattered after Stephen's martyrdom ; and even that some of these, as well as the men of Cyrene and Cyprus, were among those who preached to Greeks at Antioch. The Christians of the neighbouring districts of Phoenicia and Samaria rejoiced in the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles by the hands of Barnabas and Paul (Acts xv. 3). We might conjecture that Galilean Christians also gave their approval to the world-wide gospel. Some may even have travelled far afield, in the course of their business, like the disciples of John, and sown the first seeds of the Christian message in Jewish and Gentile soil. But of all this we know nothing ; and our very ignorance of the doings of this important community of early Christians urges us to use great caution in constructing the history of those days. We must be prepared for the fact that Christianity was spread more by the ordinary Christians than by the professed missionaries. Our history deals mostly with the outstanding personalities of Peter and Paul. But the part played by the community itself simply expanding like yeast in the meal—that is not recorded, and can never be

recovered ; indeed it would have been beyond the art of any ordinary historian to record it.

The suggestion made in the first chapter that the Acts was composed at Rome during St. Paul's first imprisonment there will help to explain some of the difficulties that have been felt. It will explain to begin with why Acts closes at the end of St. Paul's imprisonment, if it was actually written at that time. We can also understand why we are given full details of some events and almost nothing of other parts of the history. From Col. i. 1, iv. 7, 10, 14, Philemon 1, 23, 24 we learn that during St. Paul's imprisonment he was accompanied by Timothy, Luke, Tychicus, Demas, Epaphras, Mark and Aristarchus. Before the end of St. Paul's imprisonment Tychicus went to Colossae, and perhaps Mark followed him ; and Epaphras went to Philippi. Knowing St. Paul's character as we do we can understand why he told some things and not others. For such a man it was natural that he should have given full information of the death of Stephen and his own conversion, on which his whole ministry depended, and that he should have related the failure of his attempt to meet the Athenian philosophers on their own ground, but it was also in accordance with his character that he should have remained silent about the many adventures (2 Cor. xi. 23-27) in which he would have appeared as the hero or principal actor. He only refers to them in 2 Cor. xi. because he was goaded into doing so by the attack on his authority. For such of these adventures as are recorded we are indebted to others who were present : Timothy will

have told the story of the exciting scene at Lystra when Paul was first deified and then stoned; Aristarchus will have told the story of the riot at Ephesus; and Luke from his own knowledge could describe the events at Philippi and the details of the last sea-voyage and shipwreck. For many of the events in the early days we are no doubt indebted to Mark; though on literary grounds it is believed that a written document, probably in Aramaic, lies behind some of those early narratives. Seeing that we know of an occasion when Paul, Luke, Mark, Aristarchus and Timothy were all gathered together in one place, there is very strong probability that was the occasion when Acts was compiled.

#### IV. DID JESUS FOUND A UNIVERSAL RELIGION ?

The ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth was all spent within the narrow confines of Palestine, and almost entirely among the Jews; nor did He during His ministry send any of His disciples further afield. By the end of the first century of our era Christianity had fully burst the national bonds, and the followers of Christ, more Gentiles than Jews, were to be found throughout the Roman Empire. Was there in the teaching of Christ some seed which developed into the universalism which became in less than a century the most marked feature of the Christian Church? Or was that universalism an invention of St. Paul, an improvement on the Christianity of Christ? In other religious movements the disciples have often departed widely from the founder. The

followers of Zoroaster produced a ritualistic religion far removed from the exalted teaching of Zoroaster himself. The Franciscans soon lost the simplicity of St. Francis. Buddhism has received accretions, such as animism and idolatry, in every country where it has spread, making it very different from the philosophy of Gautama Buddha. In each of these cases the resultant religion has fallen short of the religion of the spiritual genius who started it. People have come to regard this as the normal course of events : the modern Hindu laments the present condition of Hinduism and compares it with the golden age of the Rishis. If Christianity were just one among the religions of the world we should expect to find the same thing. The lofty principles of Jesus would never be quite understood, so that from the very beginning there would be deterioration. Now the extraordinary thing is that our first impression of Christianity is exactly the reverse of this. The attitude of the early Christians in going out with their gospel to Gentile Greeks and Romans and even to the barbarians of Lycaonia, seems a distinct advance on the attitude of Jesus who advised His disciples not to go into Samaritan villages, and Himself hesitated before giving help to a woman of Syrophenicia. So startling is the contrast that some have even asked whether Paul rather than Jesus was not the founder of Christianity. Has not Paul, they ask, used the name and influence of Jesus for the promulgation of his own views much as Plato may have used the name Socrates, and while professing to place Jesus in the highest place of honour has himself reached a higher

plane than his master? In fact was Jesus really the master of St. Paul? St. Paul did not know Jesus after the flesh, and is it not possible that the religion that St. Paul created was centred round a purely imaginary figure, not the real Jesus of history, but an ideal in the consciousness of St. Paul? Such a suggestion can easily be answered by a reference to St. John's Gospel. The author is about as unpauline as a man could well be; he has not learnt his Christianity at the feet of St. Paul; and yet he places Jesus on as lofty a pedestal as does St. Paul, and gives Him as world-wide and age-long an importance. Jesus is undoubtedly the master who has inspired both St. Paul and St. John, and there is no need to take seriously the suggestion that St. Paul was the founder of Christianity. But the fact that such a suggestion could be made shows that the Christianity of the Apostolic Age was not an obvious deterioration or dilution of the Christianity of Christ. The true explanation of this fact will be seen to be, what has already been suggested, that Christ continued to be with His followers and to impart Himself to them. But, in order that we may reach our conclusion with conviction, let us trace historically the real relationship between the world outlook of Jesus and that of the first apostles.

In investigating the actions and teaching of our Lord in this matter we must be prepared for three possibilities. Either He deliberately intended to restrict His gospel and kingdom to the Israelites and to exclude the Gentiles; or He did not face the question whether the Gentiles were to be included;



or He definitely intended the inclusion of all mankind.

When He sent out the Twelve on their mission He told them (Matt. x. 5) not to go into the way of the Gentiles or into any Samaritan city, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This might be an injunction referring only to a particular mission. But our Lord's own practice seems with but few exceptions to have agreed with it. Once (Matt. xv. 21) He made a journey to the far north, and there healed the daughter of a Gentile woman, not simply to be rid of her importunity as the disciples wished ('Send her away for she crieth after us'), but because of her great faith. As the text stands He spoke hard words to her; maybe He was only mimicking the typical Jewish way of addressing the poorer class of Gentiles, and said it with such a twinkle in His eye that she knew He did not really believe she was a dog. Or maybe, as has been suggested, it was she who first called herself a dog, and it was only a mistake of the Evangelist to put the expression first into the mouth of Jesus. Once He was passing through Samaria and Galilee and healed ten lepers of whom one was a Samaritan (Luke xvii. 11). Once he healed the servant of a Roman centurion. Once, if St. John's Gospel has recorded a true tradition (John iv.) He spoke to a Samaritan woman and asked her for a drink of water, and stayed two days teaching in that Samaritan city. Once, again if St. John's Gospel is to be trusted, He was overjoyed when some Greeks who had come to worship at Jerusalem asked to see Him (John xii. 23). And that is all. Our first impression is that



each one of these was an exceptional case, and that He followed Himself the same advice as He gave His disciples on their preaching tour. Even so, the possibility remains that this policy was only temporary, that He was waiting for something to happen before the word was to be carried to the Gentiles. Even Second Isaiah while proclaiming so insistently that the word of truth should be extended to the Gentiles, did not apparently preach to them in Babylon, but was waiting for something—the signal demonstration of God's power in delivering Israel from Babylon.

In three places it is recorded that after the resurrection Jesus proclaimed the mission to the Gentiles in terms as clear and unequivocal as could be; but, conscious that critics are standing by, scissors in hand, ready to cut out as a later interpolation anything that conflicts with their theories, it is better for us to leave for the present this categorical missionary command, and search rather for incidental remarks, which no one but a deliberate and exceedingly skilful forger could have interpolated.

The first thing to notice is that Jesus never restricts His teaching and hopes to Israel. It is the world, the earth, contrasted only with the heavenly sphere, which is the scene of the great drama which He is initiating: 'I have come to throw a fire upon the earth; and what do I wish if it is already kindled?' (Luke xii. 49). In the form of the Lord's Prayer as recorded by St. Matthew (vi. 10) the disciples were taught to pray 'Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth.' In the interpretation of the parable of the Tares we read 'the field is the world' (Matt. xiii. 38).

Similarly the field of the organizing activities of the Church is the earth, ' whatsoever thou shalt (ye shall) bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ' (Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18). And, perhaps most impressive of all, the disciples are told, ' Ye are the salt of the earth ; ye are the light of the world ' (Matt. v. 13, 14). These expressions could scarcely have been used unless our Lord had intended the influence of the disciples to be felt beyond the confines of Israel ; and the latter expression is near enough to be reminiscent of Second Isaiah's famous phrase ' A light to lighten the Gentiles.' The principle that the disciples were bound to hand on the message appears frequently : ' There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light, and what ye hear in the ear proclaim upon the housestops ' (Matt. x. 26, 27). The parallel in St. Luke (xii. 2, 3) runs ' There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. Wherefore whatsoever ye have said in the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what ye have spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.' In Matt. v. 15, 16, we find, ' Neither do men light the lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand, and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven ' (cf. also Luke viii. 17). The impression one gets is that the world-wide preaching of the good news was simply axiomatic. The clearest hint of this is to be found in Mark xiv. 9 and Matt. xxvi. 13,

'Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.' Mark xiii. 10 says distinctly, 'The gospel must first (i.e. before the end of the world) be preached to all the nations,' though in view of the possibility that the chapter may be based on a pre-Christian Jewish apocalypse it is better not to use this text as evidence for the present.

There are a few statements about the extension of the kingdom beyond the bounds of Israel. Thus in Matt. viii. 11, 12, we read 'Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth' (cf. Luke xiii. 29). Luke xvi. 16 says that the limits set by the Old Testament were removed by the coming of the John the Baptist, and the preaching of the kingdom of God: 'The Law and the Prophets were until John; from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it.' The same idea underlies 'Go out into the highways and hedges and constrain them to come in' (Luke xiv. 23), but the words are not in Matthew and are probably an interpolation into the parable. They may have been taken from another parable, or may be an embroidery of oral tradition. Similarly it is perhaps not safe to use the verse in Matt. xxi. 43 at the conclusion of the parable of the wicked husbandmen, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given

to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof,' because the verse is not found in the parallel passage in St. Luke (xx. 9-18), and the parable may have originally referred to the displacement of the Pharisees by more faithful Jews, and not displacement of Jews by Gentiles.

Of a different type altogether are the occasions on which Jesus connected Himself with the universalistic hopes of the Old Testament. When he preached at Nazareth He found the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and read a passage about the work of the Servant of the Lord and straightway attributed it to Himself (Luke iv. 21). The solemn words 'To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears' seems to be a claim that the ideal of the Servant of the Lord was fulfilled in Christ. In three places there is a reference to Jonah, as follows:—Matt. xvi. 4 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given it except the sign of Jonah.' Matt. xii. 39 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign shall be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.' Luke xi. 29, 30, 'This generation is an evil generation. It seeks a sign and no sign shall be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.' Of these three there can be little doubt that the first was the original form of the saying; the second is an attempt made to explain it after the Resurrection; the third is another, and more nearly correct, attempt

to explain it. The fact is that that generation had quite forgotten what the book of Jonah was—a great missionary call to the Jews to evangelize the Gentile world—and so they did not understand what the sign of Jonah meant. But we can see, looking back on the events, that the conversion of Gentiles to the gospel of Christ was the greatest sign to the world of what He was.

The numerous passages we have collected, in which incidental hints are given of the world-wide gospel, are sufficient to show that Jesus was consciously laying plans for the extension of the kingdom to the Gentiles as soon as the appropriate time had come. The reference to Jonah shows that He had not only laid His plans, but knew that the Gentile world would accept the gospel, and their acceptance of the gospel would be the manifestation of Himself. The passages quoted are extraordinarily strong testimony to the mind of our Lord. If the evangelists had wished to attribute to Him an outlook which was only developed in the Apostolic Age they might easily have interpolated clear statements about the inclusion of the Gentiles, but they would not have introduced these incidental hints. The sign of Jonah is a specially valuable piece of evidence because it was so obviously misunderstood by the evangelists.

Lastly we come to the consideration of those places where a direct missionary command is attributed to our Lord after the resurrection. They are as follows:—Matt. xxviii. 19, 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and lo ! I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age.' <sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 46, ' Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations beginning from Jerusalem.' Acts i. 8, ' Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' The three passages may be records of the same conversation. They represent a two-fold tradition that before the visible presence of Jesus was taken away He spoke plainly about the missionary expansion of the Church. That He should have done so is not surprising after the many hints that He had let drop during His ministry that the kingdom was to extend throughout the world. The question may however be asked, ' If He had spoken so plainly, would there have been any doubt among the apostles as to whether they ought to admit Gentiles into the Christian Church ? ' That difficulty is dealt with in the next section and throughout the commentary, from which it will appear that the question was not really whether Gentiles

<sup>1</sup> This text has been vehemently attacked on the ground that our Lord would not have used the Trinitarian formula, and on the supposition that there is patristic evidence for the omission of the words. See the note on ii. 38. For a complete answer to the difficulties the reader is referred to Dr. Chase's article entitled ' The Lord's Command to Baptize ' in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, July, 1905. Dr. Chase shows that the attack on the text has no basis in fact.



should be admitted, but whether they must become Jews first. For the present we rest with the conclusion that such a direct command to preach to the Gentiles was to be expected after the tendencies exhibited in His teaching throughout His ministry.

## V. A RELIGION OF OPEN DOORS

Judaism like Hinduism was a religion of closed doors: not quite so firmly closed as those of Hinduism; for no outsider can become a caste Hindu, but an outsider could become a Jew if he consented to accept a system of regulations which affected every detail of life from the food he might eat to the distance he might walk on the sabbath day. Christianity is the child of Judaism, Christianity with wide open doors, Christianity that knows no difference between Jew and Gentile, that has risen above the narrow outlook of nationalism. And in the Acts of the Apostles may be read the story of how the Christian movement surged on, pressing against the doors, gradually forcing them open, and finally bearing down the whole barrier by an overflowing flood.

Many of the Jews themselves felt the disadvantage of the barrier and the gates that kept the Gentiles out. Rabbi Joshua would have pushed open the door a little and admitted uncircumcised proselytes who were baptized; but Rabbi Eliezer knew that circumcision was in the Law and baptism was not; so the door was banged shut again.<sup>1</sup> What was to

<sup>1</sup> Talmud, Yebamoth f. 46a, quoted by Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 26.



be done? There were so many Gentiles who were attracted by the monotheism, the freedom from idolatry, and the high austere morality of the Jews; and yet nothing would induce them to submit to be circumcised, to sit still and eat cold dinners on the sabbath, and to accept as their rule of life the legislation that had been given to a little hill tribe centuries ago. Official Judaism could not recognize them; officially it must be stated that Gehenna was their portion. But Jewish commonsense thought otherwise: though they might not be styled 'proselytes', yet it was obvious that they feared God, and room would be found for them in the Kingdom when Messiah came. Thus it came about that in every synagogue throughout the Dispersion there were not only Jews and proselytes, but also many Gentiles who were spoken of as 'God-fearers'. But however well-disposed individual Jews might be to the 'God-fearers', the middle-wall-of-partition separating the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles still stood with its warning of the death penalty for any transgressor, and the great curtain separated off the Holy of Holies and permitted the approach to the innermost shrine of God to none save the Jewish High Priest. The gates and barriers of Judaism stood firm.

But within the fold of Judaism began to grow a new movement, the outcome of the life and teaching of Jesus. On the day when the Jews crucified Him, as if to show the coming destruction of those barriers, the curtain before the Holy of Holies was rent in two from top to bottom. We are not told of the

consternation of the priests, nor how they secretly patched it together again in the dead of night. But we read in the Acts how the 'God-fearers' welcomed the new movement and the good news that the death of Christ had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The turning of the God-fearers to Christianity was the thing that more than anything enraged the Jews, for they saw Christianity fulfilling that function in the world which Judaism, but for its burdensome traditions, should have performed. Next to Christianity the most conspicuous religion which claims to be universal is Islam ; but that, while free from the barriers of caste and nationality, has made the same mistake as Judaism of supposing that all the world can be subjected to one set of rules—even the method of washing one's hands before prayer, and the attitude in prayer, has to follow the precedent of the Arabian Prophet thirteen centuries ago. Christianity started with a wider principle, that the rule of life was to be determined by the indwelling Spirit. The Council of Jerusalem wisely decided to put no external restraint upon the Gentile converts except the prohibition of manifest breaches of the moral law such as idolatry, murder and fornication. At first sight it might seem that such liberty would lead to licence, but where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty ; the indwelling Spirit leads men into righteousness and self-control in a way which cannot be achieved by any manner of external ordinances. It must not be supposed that the Christian Church at once adopted the position of spiritual freedom. It is difficult to know now how deep the cleavage was in

the days before the Council of Jerusalem between the two parties, whether we should think of a Universalistic Sect and a Judaizing Sect, or merely of universalistic and judaizing tendencies. We know that Paul and Barnabas were characteristic of the wider party, and some of the Jerusalem Jews were characteristic of the narrower party. The attitude of the latter party may be illustrated from the parable of the Marriage Supper in Matt. xxii. 1-14. When compared with the parable of the Great Supper in Luke xiv. 16-24 very striking differences show themselves. In spite of the different vocabulary and the two important additions in Matthew, there can be little doubt that the two forms of the parable go back to one parable spoken by our Lord. The differences in vocabulary are to be explained by the parable being transmitted orally, but what are we to say about the additions? It seems probable that Luke's form of the parable is as it was repeated in the circle of Christians of wider outlook—with that agrees the gathering of guests from the high-ways and hedges—while Matthew's form represents the parable as it was repeated in the narrower Judaistic circle. Thoughts centring on Jerusalem account for the insertion of the verse foretelling its destruction for rejecting the messages of God (Matt. xxii. 7); while fear of the entry of Gentiles into the Kingdom without accepting the Jewish Law accounts for the addition of the verses about the man who had not put on a wedding garment. It is presumably intended in the parable that he refused to put on a garment that was offered to him; and the most obvious reference is to the Gentile Christians who

refused to accept the burden of the Law. People who held such views would naturally be more in the favour of the non-Christian Jews than men like St. Stephen and St. Paul who saw the wider vision. It must have been a serious temptation to the Judaizing party to maintain friendship with the non-Christian Jews at the expense of breaking the Christian fellowship with the universalistic party. It is therefore very greatly to their credit that they held out the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, and that although they fought for a while for their narrower position, they ultimately accepted the Pauline policy at the Council of Jerusalem. From that time onwards we have no reason to suppose that the Christian fellowship was broken over this question: the wider policy had been officially and whole-heartedly accepted as the policy of the Church.

## VI. THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The greater part of our Lord's teaching dealt with the Kingdom of God. He appeared to be endeavouring to depict for the benefit of His disciples something that He called the Kingdom of God, something exceedingly difficult to make clear to them, and needing for its exposition His wonderful collection of parables. Naturally as we leave the Gospels and turn to the continuation of the narrative in the Acts we expect to find full descriptions of what the kingdom was like in its actual working. Instead of that we find it scarcely mentioned; and when it is mentioned it is not as a thing actually existing, but

as something preached about. Jesus spoke to the disciples the things concerning the Kingdom of God (Acts i. 3); Philip preached to the Samaritans the good tidings of the Kingdom of God (viii. 12), and we find it a subject of St. Paul's preaching in Lycaonia, Ephesus and Rome (xiv. 22, xix. 8, xx. 25, xxviii. 23, 31). The fact is that the Kingdom of God was a great ideal set before the disciples and the world by Christ. Almost all the ideals that He set before men were bound up in the ideal of the kingdom, for it suggested the ideal relationship between each individual and his King, as well as the ideal relationship between the fellow-subjects of the King. This ideal caught the imaginations of the early disciples. Not only did they treasure eagerly the parables of the kingdom in their minds, but we read, 'They kept a firm grasp on the teaching of the apostles, and on the fellowship (i. e. of fellow-subjects with one another), and on the Breaking of Bread (the sacrament of unity between Christ and them), and on the prayers (which were their daily means of access to God)' (ii. 42). Yet in spite of coming so near to realizing the ideal of the Kingdom of God—or rather because they were so impressed with the ideal—they dared not speak of their own life as the Kingdom. It was difficult to find any word that would quite express the profound difference between their new life and the old; and at the same time would avoid suggesting that they had anywhere near attained the ideal. They called themselves Disciples (learners in the school of Christ), or Saints (men who had definitely turned from the defilements of the world). Then

they tried the expression 'The Way.'<sup>1</sup> If they were not yet the kingdom, they were at any rate the road leading to it. Their enemies called them a Sect,<sup>2</sup> using a Greek word which meant they were going a way of their own choosing. This certainly they could not accept (though they did not mind accepting from non-Christians the nick-name of 'Christians'). Finally they chose the word 'Ecclesia.'<sup>3</sup> This word was commonly used for any assembly, so that its use by the Christians would readily be understood by Greeks. But it also had a particularly sacred association for Jews, inasmuch as it frequently appears in the Greek Old Testament as the translation of 'qāhāl,' 'the congregation of Israel.' The underlying idea, both in the Greek usage, and in the special Jewish sense, is of an assembly which is 'summoned' or 'called.' A Jew could scarcely think of 'qāhāl' or 'ecclesia' without thinking of God who had summoned them to be His people. Thus the use of the word 'ecclesia'<sup>4</sup> for the Christian community laid stress on what God had done for them. They had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them, and summoned them to be His people. In English the word 'ecclesia' is usually translated 'Church,' but the original meaning must be borne in mind—though 'Church'<sup>5</sup> too is of Biblical origin,

<sup>1</sup> ix. 2, xix. 9, 23, xxii. 4, xxiv. 14, 22.

<sup>2</sup> xxiv. 5, 14.

<sup>3</sup> For the use of the word 'ecclesia' see Burton, *Galatians*, p. 417.

<sup>4</sup> Hindustani 'kalīsā,' derived from 'ecclesia' through the Persian.

<sup>5</sup> Hindustani 'girjā,' derived from 'kuriakos' through the Portuguese.



for it comes from the Greek 'kuriakos' meaning 'belonging to the Lord,' and so means either 'the people of the Lord' or 'the Lord's house.'

As soon as we realize these steps by which the early disciples came to call themselves the Church, we are well on the way to seeing the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church. When men strove to obtain the ideal of the Kingdom the result was the Church. Thus the Kingdom of God is still an ideal, still something in the future. Bishop Gore has expressed it in his commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (p. 273), by saying 'the Kingdom of God is something wider than the Church, which exists to prepare for it.' Similarly Bishop Westcott, commenting on Eph. i. 11 'to sum up all things in Christ,' says, 'The word here expresses the typical union of all things in the Messiah, a final harmony answering to the idea of creation. . . . This consummation lies beyond the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, which contributes towards its realization.' Thus when in the Creed we fix our faith on 'One Holy <sup>1</sup> Catholic and Apostolic Church' we are expressing our faith in the ideal of the Kingdom, and at the same time saying that we believe the Church is working towards becoming the Kingdom, and for that end must have the qualities of oneness, holiness and universality, and must be laid on the foundation which Christ laid when for those three laborious years He imbued the first

<sup>1</sup> The word 'Holy' in the original form of the Creed has been accidentally omitted in the English Creed of our Communion Service.



apostles with His ideals. If, instead of approaching the question in this manner, we start by considering the obvious qualities of the Church (whether of the Apostolic Age, or of Church History, or of the present day), we may get an idea of a Church which is many, unholy, not universal, not grounded on the foundation of the Apostles. Many people nowadays do look at the Church from that point of view and it is not surprising that they find no use for the Church. Indeed, were we to fix our faith on Many, Unholy, Un-universal, Un-apostolic Churches, we should be turning our backs on Christ's ideal of the Kingdom of God. But, in spite of the many imperfections of the Church in every age, actually and historically it arose as an attempt to put into practice the ideals of the Kingdom, and if we believe those ideals are true and practicable we must work towards putting them into practice, i.e. we must work for one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Then in so far as we are true Christians, truly trying to follow Christ, the Church of our age is the expression in time of what the Kingdom of God is in eternity.

Before going further let us see where we should be without the Church. So often people say they are attracted by Christ but repelled by the Church<sup>1</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> The accusation against Christians implied in this statement ought to make us seriously examine our shortcomings. But many are apt to regard it as a real indictment of the Church, in fact a twentieth century discovery that Christ is all right and the Church all wrong. The charge is as old as Porphyry, that learned and valiant opponent of Christianity of the third century. His words were, 'What I am going to say may

we are bound to ask whether it is the faults of some particular Church, say the Church of the Province of India, Burma and Ceylon, or the Episcopal Methodist Church, that they object to ; or whether they really wish to do without a Church of any kind whatever. Probably it is the former, for to do without a Church of any kind would take away the very essence of Christianity. The life of a man who refused to enter into any relations with his fellow-Christians would be that of a hermit ; and though he might draw near to God as a mystic, yet his religion would be entirely selfish. He could not put into practice any of the altruistic teaching of the Sermon on the Mount ; he would not be striving towards accomplishing Christ's ideal of the Kingdom of God. Having thus lost the distinctively Christian things in his religion, the religion that remained to him would be a mysticism differing little if any from the mysticism of Sufis and Sadhus. We conclude therefore that despite the failings of any particular part of the Church, a Church of some sort is essential to Christianity. Once more, because of its importance, we draw attention to Acts ii. 42 where one of the first signs of the new order of things was the Christian ' fellowship.'

As we have seen the early Christians tried a number of other expressions before they adopted the name

indeed appear extraordinary to some people. The Gods have declared Christ to have been most pious ; he has become immortal and by them his memory is cherished. Whereas the Christians are a polluted sect, contaminated and enmeshed in error.' (Quoted by Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of the Church*, I. p 506 note).

Church (i.e. Ecclesia). At the same time the function of the Church was being thought out, especially by St. Paul. The Acts, being a historical work, and not a doctrinal work, does not tell us much about such developments of doctrine ; but all the same, a development was going on, as we see from the Epistles of St. Paul, and had reached a fully thought-out scheme by the time the Acts was written. So Luke, who was a companion of St. Paul during his imprisonment at Rome (Col. iv. 14) cannot have been unacquainted with his theory of the Church ; and there can be little doubt that it was partly because St. Paul had impressed him with the importance of the Church that St. Luke took the trouble to write the Acts. If we are to understand the history we must have some idea of this underlying theory.

The theory, to put it in few words, is that the Church is the continuation of the Incarnation of God in Christ. The Incarnation is the means God has chosen to show Himself to the world. The humanity that He adopted is not an accident, nor is it a mere unreal appearance of humanity. As far as we can understand there was no other way in which God could make Himself known to men and bring men into union with Himself. Christ, whom human hands felt, eyes saw, and ears heard, is actually God. He is related to us as fellow-man. By virtue of His humanity we are made one with Him and hence with God. His humanity did not cease with His death on the cross. Although His body after the Resurrection was endowed with new powers, yet then, and after the Ascension also, He retained all that pertains to true humanity.

But how are we who live in these latter days, who are unable to see, hear, touch the body of Christ, how are we to benefit by His humanity? St. Paul's answer was that what the bodily presence of Christ was to those who knew Him after the flesh, that the Church is for us who live afterwards. The Church, he said, is the Body of Christ. The individual Christian may be seen and handled, and the Church which is made up of men may be seen and handled. If we regard an individual Christian we see something of God and also something of error, yet in contrast with the non-Christian we see much of God. Much more true is this of the Church: we see something of God and something of error; but compared with any other collection of men we see very much of God. The Church is an imperfect image of God for two reasons, first that the human individuals composing it are imperfect, and secondly that it does not yet include the whole human race. Both these imperfections are temporary. The Church is working towards the perfection of its members, and also towards the inclusion of all mankind; and it is within our power to hasten both these processes. The Church is working towards becoming what Christ is already, namely, a perfect representation of God. Ever since the Second Commandment was promulgated religious-minded men have revolted against the idea of having any outward form to represent God. 'We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man' said St. Paul (Acts xvii. 29). Such an idol, even if made of the most precious metal, is less precious than God; even if

made with the highest art of man, is less than the beauty of God. But the Church is not a thing once for all established and unchangeable, limited by the resources and powers of one man. It is a growing organism, and as it grows it becomes an ever-renewed source by which we are getting to know God who is continually revealing Himself.

If this theory of St. Paul's is true, as Christians generally have agreed, the absolute necessity of the Church is even more strongly established. But it is satisfactory to feel that the necessity of the Church does not depend solely on any theory, but follows, as we have seen above, from the elementary principles of Christianity.

If we accept the theory of the Church as the Body of Christ, many conclusions may be drawn about the Church. One of the most important for our present time is as follows. The great characteristic of God that was proclaimed by Isaiah was His moral unity. By that is meant, not simply that God is one, but that He cannot help being one because of His moral character. The perfect harmony of God does not admit any rivalry, opposition, divided opinions or divided wills. This fact of God's character, first revealed to Isaiah, is universally accepted by Christians. If then the Church is to show forth in the world the character of God it must display in itself moral unity. That is to say, it must not only be one Church, but its unity must spring from a complete harmony of all its parts. At a time when many Christians are seeking re-union of the Church for reasons of expediency—the waste of energy in over-

lapping agencies—it is important to recognize that the harmony and unity of the Church is demanded by its essential nature as showing forth the harmony and unity of God. A mechanical unity, such as that of the Roman Catholic Church, does not fulfil the requirement of a unity based on harmony of the parts. Nor, on the other hand, would that requirement be satisfied by friendly comity existing between separate sects. As we read the Acts we shall watch with interest the steps taken by St. Paul to establish a harmonious unity of the primitive Church.

#### VII. THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST GENERATION AND THE CHURCH OF INDIA

The Acts of the Apostles is the history of the early days of the Christian Church. The conditions of that time will never be exactly repeated. Attempts to model the life and organization of the Church in modern times on the Church of the apostles have failed and are bound to fail. Apart from the different conditions of life brought about by modern civilization, it is evident that an organization nineteen hundred years old must have developed since its first inception, or else be dead. The Church in India at the present time is in many respects like the Church of the apostles, and in many respects unlike. Like the early Church it is new, feeling after the organization, the forms and ceremonies which are appropriate to the time and country. As the early Church was influenced in many ways by the Greek, the Roman, and the Hebrew ways of thought ; so the Church of India will not have found its feet until it



has expressed itself in terms of the ancient civilizations of this land. But unlike the early Church, the Church of India has a Christian past. It does not start anew with apostles coming straight from converse with the incarnate Lord; but it has behind it the experiences and history of the Churches of England and Scotland, the daughter Churches of England in America, the reformed Churches of the European continent, as well as the ancient Church of Rome and to some extent the ancient Eastern Churches through the medium of the Syrian Church of South India. It is the problem of Christian India to use the experience of the various Churches throughout their history, to fit them into a framework which will be in accordance with the mind of Christ, and thus to produce a living organism which will be suited to the temperament and genius of India and able to grow side by side with the growth of India. The problem is made more interesting because this foundation-laying of the Indian Church comes at a time when Christian people throughout the world are beginning to realize the weakness and fault of disunion. There is even a prospect that the first visible movement towards re-uniting the divided Church of Christ may take place on Indian soil. Probably the hardest problem before the Church of India is to know to what extent and in what directions it is permissible to adopt modes of thought or practices that have been associated with the other faiths of India. It will perhaps help towards the solution of this problem if we can find how far the early Christian Church was influenced in its forms and ceremonies,



its theology and its modes of worship, by the Jewish and Gentile background. To some extent this question arises in the earliest days of the Church dealt with in the Acts of the Apostles, though the external influences continued to make themselves felt in the generation succeeding that of the apostles.

It has always been recognized that Judaism formed the cradle of Christianity, that the Jewish prophets had been used by God specially to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. We are therefore not surprised when we find Jewish customs taken over wholesale into the Christian Church. That the early Church should have adopted a seven-day week, with one day as a day of rest and worship, and two days as days of fasting, in imitation of the Jewish week ; that the reading of Scripture, prayers, and singing of hymns, should be the main parts of Christian devotional meetings, as they had been of synagogue worship ; that the Christians should have adopted the Jewish lunar calendar in determining Easter : all this seems to us natural, considering the relation between the Old Testament and the New.

It comes as a greater surprise to us to learn that Christians adopted theological phrases and ideas from Gentile religion, and this fact makes it necessary for us to try to get a clear idea of the religious condition of the Gentile world in the Roman Empire in the days of the apostles. A visitor touring the Empire in those days would have brought back enough information to fill many volumes about the different Gods and Goddesses, their temples and their altars, their crowds of worshippers ; the new worship of the

Emperor and of Rome, now firmly established in Asia Minor; the varying schools of philosophy, standing outside the popular religion. But with most of these things we need not concern ourselves, for they were dead already. Despite the crowds which still attended the temples, the old religions had lost their meaning. They were already outworn by the advance of human thought, and custom rather than conviction kept them seemingly alive. The cult of Cæsar and Imperial Rome we may ignore too, for though it was the excuse for sending many Christians to martyrdom, it was not properly speaking a religion. Nowadays we should call it imperialistic political propaganda. But there was a real religion making its way through the Empire at the time when Christianity came into the world. Possibly our globe-trotting visitor might not have noticed this religion, for it was carried on in secret, as its name Mystery Religion, or Mystery Religions, implies. St. Paul sometimes spoke of the Christian religion as a 'mystery', but he made it clear that the Christian mysteries were open to all mankind. The Mystery Religions arose in Egypt and the East, but only attained power when they came into the Empire and offered salvation and union with God to people weary of the old dead paganism. They were almost all pantheistic in their nature, resembling somewhat in their mixture of Eastern and Western the modern ideas grouped under the general name of Theosophy. The spread of the Mystery Religions is partly to be accounted for by the same political conditions of peace and safe travel that enabled Christianity to spread so rapidly; but also by

the fact that these Mystery Religions offered something that the human soul sorely needs, mystic communion with God. What religious-minded man would not be attracted by a cult which taught him to pray such words as these, 'Come to me Lord Hermes, as babes come into the wombs of women . . . I know thee, Hermes, and thou knowest me. I am thou, and thou art I'? Such communion was not offered in the old religions of Greece and Rome, and therefore people eagerly grasped after this new faith. Christianity also offered communion with God; and if we were able to write an inner history of the early days of Christianity it would no doubt largely be a conflict between Christianity and the Mystery Religions, in which each tried to make good its claim to bring men into touch with God. Now while Christianity and the Mystery Religions were waging this conflict against one another it was natural that they should be influenced by each other. The extent to which Mystery Religions were influenced by Christianity is well known: with a certain amount of Christian colouring, and the adoption of the name of Christ, they masqueraded in the post-apostolic period as Christianity, their devotees calling themselves Gnostics as a claim to superior knowledge. Then it was a life and death struggle between true Christianity and Gnosticism, in which Gnosticism perished. The study of the conflict in that later stage belongs to Church History rather than to Bible commentary. But the lesson of the whole conflict for all ages, and perhaps above all for India, is this, that though true religion must include a mystical element, it must be based upon

historical facts. A religion based upon mythology or mere human speculation is like a house built upon the sand. The strength of Christianity depends upon its two elements of historical foundation and mysticism. That is the reason that we are not afraid of Biblical criticism, because it only brings into clearer relief the historical facts on which Christianity is based.

The extent to which Christianity, on the other hand, was influenced by Mystery Religions and similar Gentile ideas is much harder to tell. Dr. Firminger in his commentary in this series on the Epistle to the Colossians (p. 208) has referred to the pre-Christian use of the prayer 'Lord have mercy upon us.' One well-known scholar has tried to show that the title 'Lord' was applied to Christ in imitation of the use of Mystery Religions, but as we have evidence of the use of the Aramaic word for 'Lord' in the sentence 'Maran atha' 'Our Lord cometh,' that theory can be safely neglected. Others have tried to show that the sacraments were not instituted by our Lord, but were borrowed from Mystery Religions. That theory also may be rejected, for not only have we excellent evidence for the institution of the Christian sacraments by our Lord, but we have no evidence that anything quite like sacraments was practised in the Mystery Religions. There was certainly no influence from the side of Mystery Religions such as to give rise to any of the things which are of the essence of Christianity. But the frame of mind of devotees of Mystery Religions must have affected their attitude when they became Christians. Just as many Christians before their conversion had been zealous Jews, trying to

obtain righteousness by observance of the Mosaic Law—though St. Paul who had tried it pronounced it a failure—so, many other Christians before their conversion had been zealous followers of Mystic Greek cults, and had sought by strange rites to come near to God and to be absorbed into Him. When the Jew became a Christian he felt the insufficiency of Judaism, and when a Greek mystic became a Christian he felt the unreality of Greek Mystery Religions. And yet both brought into Christianity their own way of looking at religion and their own religious vocabulary. The Jew would naturally emphasize the service of prayer, Bible-reading, preaching and singing which he had learnt in the Synagogue. The convert from Mystery Religions would emphasize the sacraments which gave that union with God which he had sought for in the Mysteries. Of such a kind was the influence of Judaism and Mystery Religions on Christianity; and the attempt to exaggerate their influence so as to explain away the miraculous origin of Christianity is a failure. The central core of Christianity always remains unexplained. Nothing but the vital forces set in motion by our Lord Jesus Christ can explain the extraordinary movement which spread from Jerusalem as a little stream and flowed westwards till it had engulfed the civilized world as a tidal wave. Nor can that vital force let loose by Jesus be explained in any other way than by the conclusion as to His divine nature which the Great Church has always held. Christianity is beginning to get a foothold in this land, and soon will try to free itself from modes of expression which are purely

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western. The western missionaries, unless their eyes are open wide for the truth, may be shocked at the adoption of expressions and modes of worship from non-Christian religions. Indians, on the other hand, may be tempted to introduce eastern expressions and modes of worship because they are eastern rather than because they are good. But the force that will carry Christianity like a tidal wave over India will not arise from some theosophical combination of Hinduism, Buddhism and Mystic Islam, but is the same life-giving force proceeding from Jesus Christ, which is indeed, what the Great Church has always believed it to have been, the entry of God into humanity.

## COMMENTARY

### THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

#### *Ascension and Pentecost i-ii*

THE former treatise I made, O Theophilus, **11**  
concerning all that Jesus began both to do

1. **The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.** With these words begins one of the most remarkable books ever written. Of all persons in the world's history none is more remarkable than Jesus Christ. Those who are His followers give him the adoration and devotion which may only be given to Almighty God. Thousands of those who do not follow Him acknowledge Him to have been and to have taught as no other man ever did. Unable yet to break away from the religious system in which they have been brought up, unable critically to discern between the true and false in those systems, indeed fearing to analyse them critically lest they should be obliged to abandon much that they have implicitly believed, such people perforce acknowledge the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. That is the beginning, and the right beginning. The simple reading of the Gospel narrative sets before their eyes a life and character which appeals to the human heart as nothing that can be found in the Quran and the Traditions concerning Muhammed, nothing in the sacred writings of Hinduism, Buddhism,



2 and to teach, until the day in which he was

Zoroastrianism or Judaism. When Sundar Singh as a boy burnt the Bible, his father expostulated with him declaring the Bible to be a Holy Book.<sup>1</sup> Christ had begun to make an impression on Sundar Singh's father, though he could not leave the Sikh faith of his ancestors. The son realized more acutely the antagonism between Christianity and Sikhism, and in due time made the better choice. For some clear souls the life of Jesus makes such an appeal that nothing more is needed: where He calls they must follow, though it means leaving behind the teaching of the Vedas, the teaching of Buddha or Zarathustra. For others, no less attracted by Jesus, the very greatness of Jesus forces them to ask 'Is it true? Is it truer than the teaching of my childhood?' And then begins to process, the weary process, of criticism. This entails bringing to the test of modern knowledge the sacred books of every religion; asking of them the truth of the history they record; asking of them the truth of their theology, the truth of the life they offer. Time was when even Christians feared criticism of the Holy Bible, and we can well sympathize with others who hesitate to criticize, or even hear criticized, their holy books. Within the last century Christians have learnt better. They welcome criticism of the Old Testament and the New—literary criticism, historical criticism, 'higher' criticism and criticism of every kind—because the keen glance of the critic, whether for attack or for defence, has only brought

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Parker: *Sadhu Sundar Singh, Called of God*, page 12.

received up, after that he had given command-

out more clearly the essential excellence of the message. Christ himself laid down one great principle by which the truth might be tested, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Let us go right to the centre of Christianity and apply this test to Jesus Christ Himself. That is what St. Luke did. First he wrote his Gospel, painting in vivid colours the picture of what Jesus began both to do and to teach during the three short years of His ministry. Then he wrote this second book which we call 'The Acts of the Apostles,' but which he might have preferred to call 'The fruits of the Beginning made by Jesus,' describing what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Church. People have often asked why St. Luke called the Gospel the 'first treatise' instead of the 'former treatise,' suggesting, if he was accurate in the use of the Greek language, that there were more treatises to follow. Maybe the Greek word had lost the precise meaning it had in earlier times ; but maybe St. Luke was conscious of the fact that his second book could only tell of the first-fruits of Christ. Indeed it is the fact that the whole tale of the fruits of Christ is yet to be told. The Acts is the story of the first harvest of souls inspired with new life and hope and fellowship ; modern missions are the latest harvest ; and there are more and greater harvests to come.

In striking contrast with the way in which Christ continues to work and teach through us His disciples, notice how Gautama Buddha left his disciples to their

ment through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles

own devices, 'O Ānanda,' he said, 'I am growing old, and my journey is drawing to its close. . . . In future be to yourselves your own light, your own refuge: seek no other refuge. Hold fast to the truth of your refuge; look not to any but yourselves as refuge.'<sup>1</sup>

2. After that He had given commandment through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles whom He had chosen. The substance of this command had already been reported by St. Luke in his Gospel (xxiv. 47-49) and is repeated in greater detail in this chapter (Acts i. 4, 8) that the apostles were to stay in Jerusalem till they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and then go forth to preach the Gospel in ever-widening circles till it reached the end of the earth. In St. John's Gospel (xx. 22) we are told that Christ breathed on the apostles saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost', which would seem at first sight to agree with the statement of this verse that the command of Christ was accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit. But we are so repeatedly told that the gift of the Holy Spirit came first at Pentecost, that we are inclined to think that 'Receive the Holy Ghost' is St. John's account of Pentecost. If so, we probably should translate this verse 'after that He had given commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen through the Holy Spirit.' This means that Christ was inspired by the Holy Spirit in His choice of the

<sup>1</sup> Mahā Parinibbāna Sūtta, quoted by Cave: *Redemption, Hindu and Christian*, p. 153f.

whom he had chosen : to whom he also shewed **3** himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days,

apostles, as we read in x. 41 'made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before by God.'

**3. Shewed Himself alive.** This expression clearly means more than mere visions. The earliest certain mention in literature of the resurrection of Christ is 1 Thess. i. 10 and iv. 14, written within twenty-one years of the event. If the view here adopted of the date of Galatians be correct then Gal. i. 1 is even earlier, and within twenty years of the event. St. Paul again mentions the resurrection, with a detailed list of the appearances known to him, in 1 Cor. xv. 3-8. With the appearances there mentioned is coupled the vision to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, but in such a way as to show that St. Paul's vision was not on a level with the other appearances. St. Paul felt that he had seen Christ as truly as the others, but yet it was out of the regular course of things, like a child born out of due time. The Gospels, with their accounts of the resurrection, were composed after 1 Thess. and 1 Cor., but yet early enough to bear exceedingly strong testimony to the fact that on Easter morning Christ rose with His human body, and was seen and handled by His disciples. So excited were the disciples that they did not keep notes of the exact times and places of their converse with the risen Lord, so that it is not possible for us now to reconcile all the statements. But of the fact

and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together

of the resurrection itself the historical evidence is probably stronger than of any other event in ancient history. Above and beyond the written testimony of the New Testament there is the unanswerable evidence that the apostles passed their lives in labours, dangers and sufferings voluntarily undergone solely in consequence of their belief in the resurrection. There can be no other explanation of the Acts of the Apostles and of the early history of Christ than the fact that Jesus Christ rose again on the third day.

**Speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God.** It has been frequently suggested that in those forty days our Lord gave precise directions to the disciples as to the conduct of the Christian Church. The notion arose as early as the end of the second century, for Clement of Alexandria is quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* ii. 1) as saying 'The Lord delivered all knowledge after the resurrection to James the Just and John and Peter; they delivered it to the rest of the apostles.\*' People have often suggested that among these directions were commands as to the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons; and their ordination by laying on of hands; the laying on of hands on the laity (Confirmation); the observation of the first day of the week as a day of worship. Now we have seen that the expression 'kingdom of God,' so common in the Gospels, is very rare in the Acts and Epistles; the reason being

with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the

that the Acts and Epistles deal with the working out in practice of the ideal which the kingdom represents. To that working out in practice another name—the Church—was given. Thus when we read that Christ spoke the things concerning the kingdom of God it means definitely that He was laying down principles of the Christian life as He had done in the days of the ministry, and not giving regulations for the external conduct of the Church. Dean Inge adds the following argument, 'The first disciples believed that they had their Master's authority for expecting the end of the existing world order in their own lifetime. Whether they understood Him or not, clearly they could not have held this opinion if they had received instructions for the constitution of a Church.'<sup>1</sup>

Many Christians feel that it would have been very much better if Christ had laid down definite rules. They forget that the Holy Spirit is ever with us to guide us as the occasion shall require. The fact that Christ did not lay down rules and regulations forces us to depend continually on the Spirit. 'The Church is no weakly plant needing the support of a stick; it is a robust tree with the sap of the Holy Spirit pulsing within and carrying life-giving power from roots to branches. In Muhammedanism it is supposed that the Prophet of Arabia laid down unchangeable rules

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review* 1918, p. 33, quoted in *The Spirit*, p. 135.

5 Father, which, *said he*, ye heard from me : for John indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 They therefore, when they were come

for all times and all places. Particularly is this the case in Shi'ism. ' The position of the Shi'ite was and is that there must be a law (*nass*) regulating the choice of the Imam, or leader of the Muslim community ; that that law is one of the most important dogmas of the faith and cannot have been left by the Prophet to develop itself under the pressure of circumstances.' <sup>1</sup> Christianity, on the other hand, is the spiritual religion foretold by Jeremiah (xxxi. 33, 34), ' I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people : and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying " Know the Lord " ; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.'

5. The baptism with Holy Spirit here spoken of refers primarily to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ; but also to Christian baptism, which is not a mere outward symbol, but is a means of receiving the divine gift. The sentence is quoted by St. Peter in Acts xi. 16 with reference to the baptism of Cornelius. See further the note on ii. 38.

6-8. A large part of our Lord's teaching had been

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, *Muslim Theology, etc.*, p. 29.



together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And <sup>7</sup> he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set

concerned with the kingdom of God. We who have read and pondered long over the parables of the kingdom, in the light of the history of Christianity, see clearly that He intended the kingdom to burst the bonds of Judaism. We see that the realm of God is far greater than can be narrowed within the limits of any race; and we are inclined even to smile at the Brahman's claim to religious privilege. But to understand either the feelings of the Brahman or of the ancient Jew we must put ourselves into their position and consider their past history. So much of the religious thought of India has originated within the Brahman caste, that it is difficult for them to think of others as their religious equals. It was so also with the Jews: they had received, as we read in the Old Testament, such revelations of God as no other race ever had. Compared even with Zoroastrianism and Greek Mystery Religions (for we may assume that the Jews knew nothing of religions further afield like Buddhism) the Jewish religion was unique. Now God's dealings are always personal and direct; so He did not teach through the prophets abstract truths about Himself, but He taught the Jews what He was to *them*. It was a natural conclusion for them to draw that what He was to them, He was to them alone; that no other race could claim Him as their God and King. As we all know, the

8 within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon

hopes of Israel for the future rested upon one who was to come as God's Anointed and to reign. What more natural than for them to suppose that the realm of God's Anointed would be in the main the people of Israel? Thus in that wonderful book, the book of Daniel, in which the persecuted Israelites looked forward to the intervention of God, what was more natural than to suppose that the kingdom would consist mainly of those Jews who had been true to the faith, and that outside the kingdom would be the heathen persecutor and those faithless Jews who at his bidding had worshipped the Greek idol? The later Jewish literature up till the time of Christ and the apostles went on the same lines: the coming kingdom of God was to be an Israelite kingdom. This is not to say that Jewish Messianic hopes were purely political. They were not. They were religious hopes, but modified by the false supposition of Israel's religious prerogative. And as such they were inclined to appear in political movements. Of such movements the two most remarkable were the Maccabean revolt 166 B.C. and the final struggle against Rome in A.D. 70. In the former, even after religious toleration was granted, the Maccabees continued the struggle for political freedom from the Seleucid yoke. In the latter, political hopes were raised so high by Messianic predictions that the little nation flung itself in incredibly brave desperation against the rock of the Roman Empire and fell

you : and ye shall be my witnesses both in shattered politically for ever. But that tragedy was still some forty years in the future when the disciples stood with Jesus on the mount, and asked whether now was the time to restore the kingdom to Israel. Would Jesus now manifest Himself as the Son of Man, spoken of by Daniel, and receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days, and establish that kingdom with Zion as its capital and the pious Israelites as its citizens? How gentle was His reply ! There was no rebuke for their failure to grasp His teaching of the kingdom. Simply He laid before them the contrast : on the one hand, knowledge of future events, of dates and times foreseen in the age-long purpose of God, a knowledge which while satisfying curiosity would in no wise help them to rise to moral greatness ; and on the other hand, the active work that He had set before them of taking the good news to every nation under heaven, a task which would draw out of them all that was noblest and best. It is strange that a Jewish rabbi drew for his disciples this distinction between the mere knowledge of a future date, and the moral duty of to-day. Browning has put it into modern English verse, but the story goes back to Rabbi Eliezer Ben Hyrkanos about A.D. 90-130 :—

‘ Would a man ’scape the rod ? ’  
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,  
‘ See that he turn to God  
The day before his death.’  
‘ Ay, could a man inquire  
When it shall come ! ’ I say.  
The Rabbi’s eye shoots fire—  
‘ Then let him turn to-day ! ’

Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and

Human curiosity is much the same to-day as it was 1900 years ago. Still men ask when the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world will be. Repeatedly Christ had told the disciples that the date of the great climax was unknown save to the Father ; that is, it was dependent upon the actions of men—‘the Gospel must first be preached unto all the nations’ Mark xiii. 10—and only He who is unbounded by time and can foresee the actions that men will choose to do, only He knows when the end will be. St. Paul likewise had to urge the people of Thessalonica to settle down to their daily work, and not to fritter away their time idly in expectation of the end. And yet people even to this present day count up the years spoken of in Daniel and the Revelation and suppose that they can calculate the date of the Second Coming. That He will come we know ; that all the little advents in which He comes daily to each one of us will be summed up in one great Advent in which there will be a final judgment of moral values. But our preparation for that day would not be assisted by a knowledge of its date. Every day beginning from to-day we are to make the moral choice, ‘To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts.’ Thus, though we know not the time we can hasten it. When the kingdom of God is truly established in our hearts and throughout the world, then the age-long purpose of God will have been completed.

8. It is not necessary to do more here than draw attention once more to the world-wide commission

unto the uttermost part of the earth. And **9** when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up ; and a cloud received

given to the disciples in this verse. Christians, if they are true followers of their Master, can never rest till the Gospel has been proclaimed and accepted all the world over. It is our duty not only to evangelize the whole of India, but to carry the light into the neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Tibet.

9-11. On this last occasion when the Lord appeared in bodily form to His disciples He indicated to them by the Ascension that He would no longer show Himself in this form, and also indicated a new relationship between Himself and the Father. In those days everyone thought the world was flat, and that heaven was above and hell beneath ; and so the raising of our Lord's body into the air and its disappearance into the clouds was an acted parable of His exaltation from the earthly sphere to the heavenly, and His presence with the Father in highest glory. The importance of the Ascension seems only gradually to have dawned on the Christian Church. The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John give no account of it. Whether there was originally any reference in St. Mark or not we cannot say, for the Gospel lacks its conclusion which must have been accidentally torn off. The last twelve verses in the English version do not occur in the oldest MSS, and are a much later addition to round off the narrative. It is doubtful whether there is a reference in St. Luke, for the words ' and was carried up into heaven ' (xxiv. 51) are

10 him out of their sight. And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, be-

absent from the Bezan text. This account of the Ascension, then, that we read in Acts is the only undoubted account. The fact is usually explained by saying that the importance of the Ascension looks forward to the history of the Church, rather than looking backward to the life of Christ. This explanation can scarcely be correct, for there is no suggestion till quite late in the New Testament of the importance of the Ascension for Christians. The true explanation must be that the Ascension was first looked upon merely as a natural sequence to the Resurrection. In the Resurrection God had shown His acceptance of Christ; it simply went as a matter of course that Christ would after that return to God. All the stress in the early apostolic teaching lay on the Resurrection, as God's exaltation of Christ. The Ascension is spoken of in similar terms. St. Peter in his first speech speaks of Christ 'being therefore by the right hand of God exalted' (Acts ii. 33) and St. Stephen said, 'I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God' (vii. 56). This use of the expression 'at the right hand of God' seems to have been adopted as the usual expression of the Ascension. We find it in Rom. viii. 34, Eph. i. 20, four times in the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 3, viii. 1, x. 12, xii. 2) and 1 Pet. iii. 22; and it was crystallized into the formula of the Apostles' creed *resurrexit a mortuis, ascendit ad coelos sedit ad dextram Dei patris omnipotentis*, ('rose from the dead, ascended to the



hold, two men stood by them in white apparel ; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand **11**

heavens, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty '). St. Stephen's use of the term ' Son of Man ' suggests a reference going back to our Lord Himself, and this reference must no doubt be Matt. xxii. 44, 45, ' The Lord said unto my lord, " Sit thou on my right hand until I put thine enemies underneath thy feet." If David then calleth him lord how is he his son ? ' Evidently the disciples very soon interpreted the Ascension as fulfilling a prophecy which they saw in these words as St. Peter is represented as doing in his first speech, ii. 33-35. St. Luke in recording the Ascension in the Acts is using a source which merely related it as a fact of experience and does not attach a dogmatic significance to it. This is of the greatest importance to us. St. Luke evidently is recording what has been reported to him, probably at first hand ; he is not inventing the story in order to fit in with his doctrinal position.

It is only the later writings of the New Testament which begin to realize the full significance of the Ascension : it was something more than completion of the Resurrection ; it had an importance for *us*. St. Paul in prison in Rome interpreted the purpose of the Ascension as having a universe-wide significance, ' that he might fill all things ' (Eph. iv. 10) ; and a direct significance for us, ' If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God ' (Col. iii. 1). We get a hint of the spiritual significance



ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, which was

of the Ascension in two passages in St. John's Gospel. First in vi. 62, after the disciples had murmured at Christ's saying that we should eat His flesh and drink His blood, He explained that the saying was to be taken spiritually: 'What then if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.' In the second instance, xx. 17, Mary Magdalene wished to hold fast to Jesus by clasping Him, but He pointed to a closer spiritual union soon to be made possible, by saying, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father, but go unto my brethren and say unto them "I ascend unto my Father and your Father and my God and your God."' Finally in Rev. iii. 21 we find the full significance for the Christian believer that Christ has been exalted thus: 'He that overcometh, I will give him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also over-came and sat down with my Father in His throne.'

The discoveries of the last century have brought into fuller light the significance of this great mystery. The Ascension of the Risen Christ to the presence of God the Father is the culmination of the evolution of man. The great contribution of the nineteenth century to mankind's stock of knowledge is the discovery and proof that all created things have made a progress from the lowliest beginnings, and that man is highest on the ladder of progress. The principles on which progress has taken place are much the same through

received up from you into heaven, shall so

all creation, but the peculiar mental and spiritual powers of man have brought new principles of progress into play. Briefly, animals' progress has been in the main through individual self-assertion; man's progress has been and is through co-operation and individual self-sacrifice. Christ, who has shown the character of self-sacrifice to the fullest extent, so as to fulfil perfectly the ideal of Isa. liii is not only the highest to which man has developed so far, but the highest he can ever develop to. The highest possible goal is God Himself, and we have seen that it has been the universal Christian belief that Christ was exalted to sit at the right hand of God. This is what was said by St. Paul in the famous passage in Phil. ii. 5-11. But at first sight we do not see the importance of the fact that He who was in the beginning with God is exalted again to the right hand of God. The importance is that now at length after the long long years in which God's creative work on earth has been evolving, now at length the creature Man is raised to the highest heaven of God's presence. In this, Jesus Christ is different from and better than all other men. In biology we learn that when a new variety of plant or animal first appears with some valuable characteristic it is all alone, unique. Then by union with others, the characteristic of the new variety is transferred to more and more individuals without being in any way diminished ; so that finally the whole family may enjoy the valuable characteristic. This is the method for instance, by which if we have a handful

come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

of rice of better quality than that usually used, we can in a few years improve the whole paddy crop of India. So also it is with Christ, the first-fruits of the human race. His ascension to the Father's presence is the pledge that the whole human race, through union with Him, will be raised to the same high goal. It is to be noticed that this Christian doctrine of the evolution of mankind towards divinity is different from the doctrine of the *Upanishads* that man is by nature already divine (Atman = Brahman), though the Hindu doctrine is sufficiently near the truth to give us great cause for thankfulness that the dignity of mankind has thus been long recognized in India.

11. At the moment of our Lord's ascension the message came filling the disciples' hearts with the hope of His final coming in glory. The expectation of His early return in one way stirred them up to the greater zeal in hastening to evangelize the world ; but in another way made their life more difficult. For instance St. Paul found that the people of Thessalonica were inclined to leave their proper occupations because they expected the end of the world shortly. While we still look forward to the final triumph of the end, when the kingdoms of the world will have become the kingdom of Christ, we have learnt from St. John's Gospel to pay attention rather to those daily advents in which Christ or the Spirit of Christ enters the individual heart. We are told in this verse that Christ's Second Coming will be in the

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the 12  
mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jeru-  
salem, a sabbath day's journey off. And when 13  
they were come in, they went up into the  
upper chamber, where they were abiding ; both  
Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip

same manner as his departure. This no doubt has  
reference to His appearance in the clouds as spoken  
of in Matt. xxiv. 30. But we also learn from the  
Gospels that His Second Coming will be unlike His  
ascension for it will be witnessed by the whole world,  
and will be accompanied by all the signs of glory and  
triumph.

12. In accordance with this verse the traditional  
site of the Ascension is the summit of the Mount of  
Olives. But St. Luke in his Gospel (xxiv. 50) says  
that Jesus led them out till they were over against  
Bethany. The village of Bethany was more than  
twice as far as the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem.  
St. Luke probably means that the event took place on  
the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives from which  
Bethany could be seen. See Swete, *Appearances of  
our Lord after the Passion*, p. 103.

13, 14. With the return from the scene of the  
Ascension we are introduced to the little circle that  
represented for the moment the faithful followers of  
Christ, meeting together for prayer in the upper  
room, and probably also in the temple. The chief thing  
that marked those days was the earnest expectation  
of the promised gift. The little circle consisted

and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphæus, and Simon the

of the eleven disciples, who with Judas Iscariot had been the inner circle of Jesus' disciples ; the women, including the mother of our Lord ; and the ' brothers ' of our Lord. Of the eleven the Acts tells us a great deal about St. Peter, and some of the early doings of St. John. Early tradition tells us a good deal more about St. John, making him the author of the Gospel and Epistles of St. John and the Revelation, living till an advanced age in Asia Minor. The Acts also tells us of the martyrdom of St. James the brother of St. John. Concerning the rest of the eleven the Acts is silent. Of the later traditions concerning St. Thomas, the one that brings him to South India to suffer martyrdom at Mailapur near Madras seems worthy of acceptance. An early tradition relates that St. Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew, but the exact connexion between that book and the Gospel which now bears his name is uncertain. The women here mentioned are presumably those who ministered to our Lord, and visited the sepulchre early on Easter morning. There is no further mention in Scripture of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ' brothers ' of our Lord earlier on did not believe on Him (John vii. 5), and we are not told when they came to have faith in him. Their names were James, Joses, Judas and Simon. Of these James played a prominent part in the Church at Jerusalem ; in Acts xv he sums up the decision of the meeting as if he was a kind of president ; and again he seems to occupy the same

Zealot, and Judas *the son* of James. These all **14**  
with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer,  
with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus,  
and with his brethren.

And in these days Peter stood up in the **15**  
position in xxi. 18. He is often spoken of as the first  
Bishop of Jerusalem, but it is doubtful whether he  
actually held such a position. He was probably the  
author of the Epistle of St. James. Judas is very  
probably the author of the Epistle of St. Jude: he  
there describes himself as 'Judas, a bond-servant of  
Jesus Christ, and brother of James,' claiming rather  
the position of devotion to his Master than his  
natural relationship. The view most commonly held  
nowadays as to the nature of this relationship is that  
the 'brethren' were children of Joseph and Mary born  
after our Lord. Two other views that have been held  
are (1) that they were cousins of our Lord, being sons  
of Mary's sister, and (2) that they were sons of Joseph  
by an earlier marriage. Both these views are  
practically impossible. A new view has recently  
been put forward by the Rev. Fr. E. F. Brown in his  
commentary on 1 Corinthians in this series, that they  
were cousins of our Lord being sons of Joseph's  
brother Clopas. It is curious that this view has not  
been suggested before, as it agrees with all the  
information given in the New Testament, as well as  
with the testimony of Hegesippus (2nd century), which  
cannot be said of any of the other views.

15-26. The election of a successor to Judas. We  
read that the number of disciples at that time was 120.

midst of the brethren, and said (and there was a multitude of persons *gathered* together, about 16 a hundred and twenty), Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to 17 them that took Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and received his portion in this 18 ministry. (Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity; and falling head-

From 1 Cor. xv. 6, we learn that more than 500 had seen Christ on one occasion after His resurrection. It was difficult to know how many were disciples, as there was then no baptism for admission into the number, nor any other distinct mark of discipleship. Distinctively Christian meetings can only have taken place in the upper room, and that probably could not hold more than 120. Indeed the Greek may not mean more than that 120 were gathered together, and is so translated by R. V. A further stage of development is represented later by ii. 46, 'breaking bread at home' indicating that there was no longer any attempt to restrict the meetings to one or a few special places. The fall of Judas was a moral puzzle. How could the Lord have chosen one who was so complete a failure? The full answer would bring in the problem of the extent of our Lord's human foreknowledge—a problem that we feel still beyond us. For the moment however the early disciples were satisfied with the answer that the fall of Judas



long, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known **19** to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, The field of blood.) For it **20** is written in the book of Psalms,

Let his habitation be made desolate,  
And let no man dwell therein :  
and,

His office let another take.

was foreknown by God and prophesied in the Old Testament. The quotations are from Ps. lxi. 25 and cix. 8. According to Matt. xxvii. 3-10 Judas threw down the thirty pieces of silver in the treasury and went and hanged himself. In this account he bought a field with the money, and in the field fell down and ripped himself open. The disciples had not sufficient interest in the man to keep a record of what happened: these two traditions are stories of his end current some years later. As far as the disciples were concerned it was sufficient that he went to his own place—he left the light and went out into the darkness where Christ was not reigning.

St. Peter said it was *necessary* to fill the vacant place. The sense of necessity probably arose through the feeling that eleven was an incomplete number, especially if, as seems likely, they were commonly spoken of as 'The Twelve'; and there may have

21 Of the men therefore which have companied  
with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in  
22 and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness  
23 with us of his resurrection. And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who  
24 was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And

been some recollection of the promise that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The use of the word 'lot' or 'portion' in *vv.* 17 and 26 is probably reminiscent of the lots by which the twelve tribes of Israel received their portion in the promised land. The sense of incompleteness after the departure of Judas was probably a vague idea of the part the Church of Christ was to play in the world, an idea which rapidly developed and had reached a clearly thought-out stage by the time Acts was written. The qualification required of the new apostle is interesting. His chief work was to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ, for as we shall see the resurrection formed the centre of all the early Apostolic teaching. But the significance of the resurrection was that one who had lived such a life as Jesus lived could not be held by the powers of death. The command to follow the example of Jesus occurs very little in the earliest teaching, for men were tired of good advice and example, and needed rather the power of a new life. A witness of Christ's ministry was therefore required, not merely to declare the

they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew of these two the one whom thou hast chosen, to take **25** the place in this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place. And they gave lots for them; **26** and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

example that men should follow, but to illustrate the manner of life that must burst the bonds of death and rise to victory over the grave.

We hear nothing further of the two whose names were put forward. They were men put forward by the whole body of Christians as fulfilling the requirements set out by St. Peter. The Christians first prayed, and then, either by throwing of dice or some similar method of 'chance,' left the final decision to God. Such a method of discovering the will of God is more like the Old Testament than the New. Under the dispensation of the Spirit such decisions are preferably made by the use of human judgment guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and this is the method of solving difficulties which the apostles most usually employed. In some special cases, however, in which human judgment was liable to be too much swayed by precedent, the divine will was revealed in visions or some such extraordinary way.

## 21 And when the day of Pentecost was now

1-4. The day of Pentecost inaugurated the Church of Christ. The seed sown by the Sower during His ministry now at length bore fruit in the first large accession of numbers. It was the public beginning of the Christian movement, all the previous growth being like that of a seed below the soil. One cannot help feeling that it was of Pentecost and the days that followed that the Lord spoke when He said, 'There be some that stand here that shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power.' For the noteworthy mark of that day and of the early days of Christianity was power, not human power, but the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Christians. St. Luke is very careful in the Acts to point out from time to time the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit. And since those days, except when deadness has crept over the Church, the same power has been characteristic of the Christian community.

The presence and working of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the Christian Church. We read of Him first in the first chapter of Genesis as the agent of creation. By His inspiration the Israelite prophets spoke and wrote. Wherever throughout the whole world men have had intercourse with God, that direct intercourse which we call mystic communion, it is God the Holy Spirit with whom they have come in contact. The non-Christian mystics best known to us are the Hindu Bhaktas and the Moslem Sufis. These claim extremely close communion with God, indeed so

come, they were all together in one place.

close that many of them feel that their personalities are swallowed up in the Deity. Thus the Sufi Jalālud-dīn Rumi sings :—‘ O my soul, I searched from end to end : I saw in thee naught save the Beloved ; call me not infidel, O my soul, if I say that thou thyself art He.’ Tukaram, the Marathi poet, sings :—‘ I am melted, I am lost in Thee ; when fire and camphor mingle, is blackness of any sort left behind ? My flame and Thy flame, says Tuka, are become one.’

Mānikka-vāṇagar, the Tamil Shaivite Poet, sings :—

‘ Thou gav’st Thyself, Thou gained’st me ;  
Which did the better bargain drive ?  
Bliss found I in infinity ;  
But what didst Thou from me derive ?  
O Siva, Perundurai’s God,  
My mind Thou tookest for Thy shrine :  
My very body’s Thine abode :  
What can I give Thee, Lord, of mine ? ’

It is scarcely possible to doubt that mystics such as these have experienced genuine spiritual intercourse with God. But if their intercourse is as close as they believe, what more has Christianity to offer ? It is as though there were a great lake with many bays and creeks. To one of these creeks a certain man came, and he found it the most beautiful place he had ever seen, and therefore he often resorted thither, and bathed there. One day he met some fishermen, whose business took them in boats to every corner of the great lake, and they spoke to him about the lake. He replied, ‘ Yes, I know it well ; every day my body is bathed in its waters.’ But the fishermen knew that

## 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound

he had seen but the smallest corner of it, and that he had no conception of the extent of the lake, of its great waves, and its wondrous beauty. Thus the Sufi or the Bhakta believes that he is in contact with God, is indeed in contact with God, and yet may scarcely have begun to know God as He really is. What is the reason for this ? It is because, although he has made such efforts after communion with God, the revelation he has received about God has been exceedingly inadequate. Thus in the case of the Sufis, they could find only a few sentences in the Quran to justify their belief in an immanent Deity ; the aspect of God which fills the greater part of the Quran had no interest for them, and they had practically to construct their theology afresh on the basis of their meditations and such stray hints as they may have received from Christianity or Vedantism. In the case of the Bhaktas, it is evident that anyone starting with the Hindu conceptions of Vishnu or Shiva has a great deal of false theology to unlearn before he can be in any sense in communion with the true God. The imperfect theology of both Bhaktas and Sufis is most obvious in their lack of the sense of the moral holiness of God. Muhammed laid so much stress on the power of God, transcendant above all else, that the notion that He Himself is subject to His own moral law was far to seek ; and a somewhat similar stressing of the might of Hindu deities has permitted ideas to be entertained about them which, even from the standpoint of ordinary human conduct,

as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled are distinctly immoral. The result has been that the moral demands on the worshipper have slackened, as the moral character of the Deity is imperfect. 'The divinities to which some forms of bhakti have offered their devotion have occasionally been somewhat "misty", and the extravagances of some other forms have degenerated into gross sensuality, the female element being so idolized as to lead to disgusting corruptions.'<sup>1</sup> We are told that the Moslem mystic is revered, not for his moral life, but for the ecstatic condition into which he falls and the exalted feelings which he experiences at those times. Nicholson says,<sup>2</sup> 'Neither deep learning in divinity, nor devotion to good works, nor asceticism, nor moral purity, makes the Mohammedan a saint; he may have all or none of these things, but the only indispensable qualification is that ecstasy and rapture which is the outward sign of "passing away" from the phenomenal self.' The same over-emphasis on the feeling of ecstasy is true of Hindu bhaktas. 'N. V. Tilak tells of an acquaintance really devoted to God, but who thought he had not felt such devotion as Hindus feel, the reason being that "he mistook the Hindu idea of ecstasy for devotion; Hindus," continues the Christian bhakta, "whether followers of the knowledge theory or the devotion theory, whether holding the pantheistic idea of liberation, or the dualistic principle of assimilation,

<sup>1</sup> Fraser and Edwards, *Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, p. 123.



3all the house where they were sitting. And

aspire to lose the very consciousness of self, and there to stand still in a state of ecstasy," this being regarded as "the *summum bonum* of all knowledge, of all devotion."'<sup>1</sup> Grave moral lapses are condoned if a man has mystic experiences. Thus an admirer of Ramakrishna said of him, 'His speech at times was abominably filthy. For all that he was a real Mahātman, and I would not withdraw a single word I wrote in his praise.'<sup>2</sup>

Judaism did not greatly go in for mysticism ; but it did arrive at a tremendous sense of the holiness of God, His moral separateness from all evil. And Christian mysticism, inheriting this theological belief from Judaism, has ever been protected from the results of unworthy conceptions of God. Hallāj, a Moslem mystic, went so far as to say 'Ana'l Haqq', 'I am God', and though he was on this account condemned as a heretic, other Sufis have gone practically as far, although they did not put their belief so bluntly. The notion that sinful man can be actually identical with God is simply derogatory to the holiness of God. It is only fair to say that this is felt by the Shaivite saints. According to Christian belief the only complete union between God and man can be with a man who is perfectly holy, one who can say that whatever the Father works he works. This is

<sup>1</sup> Fraser and Edwards, *Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Max Müller, *Ramakrishna. His Life and Sayings*, p. 62.

there appeared unto them tongues parting

true of Jesus Christ, and of Him only ; so that we believe that the only perfect mystical union is that of Jesus Christ and the Father, the basis of which is the perfectly holy nature which is possessed by both. The mystical experiences of Christians are made possible by the common humanity which we share with Jesus Christ. Thus the Holy Spirit of God with whom we have communion is spoken of as the Spirit of Jesus because our communion with the Spirit is by virtue of the incarnation of God in Christ. The Christian mystic does not claim so much as some non-Christian mystics, because the Christian's conception of God is higher. If he conceives deification as the ultimate goal (as some early Christians like Irenaeus and Athanasius boldly did) it is a goal not to be attained till the reign of Christ is consummated in the world to come. Yet, though the claim of Christians to mystic communion with God is not so great as that of some non-Christian mystics, Christian mystics are in reality nearer to Him, as is evident by those 'fruits of the Spirit', lives of devotion to fellow men, which are the peculiar mark of the Christian life. To return to our parable—the Christian mystic is like a man who knows the lake well enough to know how far he is from knowing it altogether. Thus, if we will judge our nearness to God, not by the feelings we have, which may be deceived through ignorance or auto-hypnosis, but by the fruits of the Christian life, we may truly believe that the incarnation of Christ has given the Holy Spirit fuller scope

asunder, like as of fire ; and it sat upon each

of activity in the hearts of men, so that we may rightly speak of the Christian era as the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Feast of Pentecost, otherwise called the Feast of Weeks, occurred seven weeks after the Passover. According to the natural interpretation of Lev. xxiii, on the Sunday (the day after the sabbath) that followed the Passover during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there was a ceremony of waving a sheaf of the first-fruits of the barley harvest before the Lord. On the Sunday seven weeks after this there was the Feast of Weeks, when a meal offering made of that year's wheat was offered. Thus the Wave Sheaf marked the beginning of grain harvest, and Pentecost the completion of grain harvest. It seems, however, that the later Jews interpreted Lev. xxiii rather differently, and reckoned the fifty days from the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, i.e. Nisan 16th, regardless of the day of the week. If the Synoptic tradition is correct that our Lord was crucified on Nisan 15th, then Pentecost would fall on a Saturday in that year ; but St. John's Gospel seems to indicate that the crucifixion was on Nisan 14th, in which case Pentecost would be a Sunday.<sup>1</sup> In the later Jewish writings known as the Talmud the Feast of Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, but there is no trace of this idea in the Old Testament or

<sup>1</sup> For further details see the article ' Pentecost ' in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*.

one of them. And they were all filled with 4

in Philo or Josephus, and it seems likely only to have originated after the destruction of Jerusalem when the Jews ceased to be agriculturists. It is even possible that the Jews only observed it as a feast of the Law-giving in imitation of the Christian Whitsunday, the festival of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Walker in his commentary on this text said, 'We should notice the perfect agreement here of type with anti-type. Our Saviour, as the Lamb of God, died on the Cross, and so fulfilled the meaning of the Paschal feast (Lev. xxiii. 5). On the morrow after the Paschal sabbath, i.e. on Easter Sunday, He arose again, in exact conformity with the type, as the "sheaf of the first-fruits" (Lev. xxiii. 10, 1 Cor. xv. 20). On the fiftieth day after the presentation of that resurrection sheaf the first-fruits of the harvest were gathered in upon the day of Pentecost (Lev. xxiii. 15-17).' It is not surprising that the early Christians, observing the importance thus laid by Easter Day and Pentecost (Whitsunday) on the first day of the week, should have set apart Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for the observance of the Breaking of Bread and for the united worship of God.

When it says that all the Christians were gathered together we must understand it, like i. 15, as referring to a body of some 120 people who could meet in one room. It must not be supposed that these were the only believers in Christ.

2, 3. Although the Greek word for 'wind' used here does not mean 'spirit,' it must be remembered

the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

that this chapter is translated from an Aramaic source, in which the word for spirit and wind is the same. Compare, e.g., Ezek. xxxvii in which the wind is described as spirit giving life to the dead bodies. Thus a great wind would be to the disciples a fitting symbol for the coming of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had spoken of Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt. iii. 11), so that again fire was a symbol which to the disciples would readily signify the Holy Spirit. The use of the expression 'tongues' of fire in describing the appearance may have been partly suggested by the gift of the tongues or languages which followed.

4. **Other tongues.** In this verse, especially connected with what follows, there is considerable difficulty. In the first place the educated people of most of the countries enumerated in verses 9-11 spoke and understood Greek; and if the apostles had preached to the crowd in Greek almost everyone would have understood. This difficulty is not, however, insuperable, for it is possible to imagine that the apostles spoke in such languages as Phrygian and Egyptian, and that the hearers were more impressed at hearing the word in their native tongue than if they had heard it in Greek. We must, however, take into account the description given by St. Paul of the gift of tongues in 1 Cor. xiv. It is clear from that chapter that what was spoken of as the gift of tongues at Corinth was an ecstatic utterance, not intelligible

Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, 5  
devout men, from every nation under heaven.

in the ordinary sense to anyone else, except when some other person present was filled with a similar ecstasy and declared in intelligible language what was the spiritual meaning of the other man's utterance. Such a phenomenon is found in other circles than that of Christianity. In the Testament of Job xlvii the daughters of Job are described as singing in angelic and cherubic languages the wonderful works of God. It also appears that speaking in tongues was practised in the worship of Hermes in the Mystery Religion. It is not unknown at the present day, and indeed certain sects of the Church have laid the greatest stress on the possession of this gift of tongues, forgetting apparently the firm warnings of St. Paul that we should earnestly desire rather the better gifts, and above all the gifts of faith, hope and love. A modern instance of the gift, witnessed by the writer, will illustrate the nature of the phenomenon. A young Telugu Christian man had been associated with a sect that practised the gift of tongues, and was told by them that he ought to seek the same gift. After a considerable time he suddenly found himself speaking in an unknown tongue. He then moved to a different part of India, and no longer associated with that particular sect ; but this gift of tongues still remained with him. On one occasion there were present this young man, and a Tamilian, and the writer. After praying together in English, which all three understood, the young man began quietly to utter unintelligible sounds,

6 And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because

and so continued for about five minutes. The languages which he knew were Telugu, English and some Tamil ; and he had been in surroundings where he had probably frequently heard Hindustani and German. Yet the two witnesses were able to state definitely that, except for the name of Christ, he uttered no word of any of these languages. Moreover he repeated certain combinations of sounds at frequent intervals—far more frequently than in real language—much as happens if one attempts to talk unintelligible gibberish. But there can be no doubt that there was no conscious attempt on this man's part to produce the ' tongues.' It was a power which, as far as anyone could see, or he himself could know, laid hold on him. Although his utterances had been calm, and his posture steady all the time, yet when he arose from his knees his eyes were full of tears, showing that he had been through a time of nervous strain. It would be easy to explain the phenomenon psychologically somewhat in this way : he had been suggesting to himself for some time that he could not be a Christian without possessing this power ; the suggestion acted upon his sub-conscious mind, until that sub-conscious mind on certain occasions took possession of his speech organs and made them give rise to unintelligible sounds. Meanwhile his conscious mind was surprised, puzzled, but withal rather pleased ; and the satisfaction of his long-felt wish made him feel, as he said, that in this experience he was specially near to God. Yet though



that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these

this may be the correct psychological explanation, there is more to be said about it. This 'possession' of the faculties by the sub-conscious mind is the first stage of prophecy, or possession of the faculties by the Spirit of God. We can trace in the Old Testament the gradual progress of prophecy. The earliest stage is the ecstatic condition into which Saul fell—'behold a band of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them' (1 Sam. x. 10)—and also David—'David danced before the Lord with all his might . . . Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord.' Then gradually as time went on the spirits of the prophets became subject to the prophets, and they rose to the great heights of inspiration of Amos and Isaiah. A study of the stages of prophecy makes it quite clear that St. Paul was correct as reckoning the gift of tongues as a gift of the Spirit, but distinctly one of the lesser gifts, less even than prophecy, which is an intelligible declaration of the will of God. Recognizing therefore that this speaking in unintelligible language was really a spiritual experience of an elementary kind, there is every reason to believe that this was what actually happened on the day of Pentecost. The speaking with tongues as a sign of divine inspiration is also found in Acts x. 46 (Cornelius and his family) and xix. 6 (disciples of John the

8 which speak Galilæans? And how hear we,  
every man in our own language, wherein we  
9 were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites,

Baptist at Ephesus), where there would have been no point in the use of foreign tongues. In the former instance we are told in xi. 15-17 that Cornelius and his family received the same gift as the apostles; from which we gather that the speaking with tongues on that occasion was the same as at Pentecost. On this supposition there can be no alternative but to assume that St. Luke's informant made a mistake in thinking that actual languages were spoken. It seems reasonable to suppose that on the day of Pentecost some of the speakers, for some of the time, spoke in Greek or Aramaic, and said sufficient to enable the crowd to know what their preaching was about; but that also they gave utterance to unintelligible 'tongues.' Hearers who knew only Greek and Aramaic, if they were charitably inclined, thought this must be some Egyptian or Phrygian or other foreign tongue, and believed it was declaring the love of God through Jesus Christ; while others, less charitably inclined, accused them of being intoxicated with wine. The fact that the Torah was translated into such languages as Egyptian, Median and Elamitish would perhaps prepare people to expect to hear the Christian Gospel in the various languages of the world. 'If it was originally related that the assembled Jews had recognized the wonderful words of the disciples to be in praise of God—and an understanding of the general sense of a prayer uttered "in

and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of

tongues" is not excluded by 1 Cor. xiv. 16—then this could very easily be expanded by tradition into the idea that the contents of the speech could, in a wonderful way, be understood even in detail.' <sup>1</sup> An interesting parallel is quoted by C. A. Anderson Scott.<sup>2</sup> It is a contemporary report of an International Salvation Army gathering held just before the War. The report said, 'Each time the theme (the saving love of God in Christ) was touched upon it brought forth from the pent-up feelings of the vast assembly a sort of half-sigh of appreciation. Yet many in the audience knew no English, but they felt that the one great truth to them was being announced at this particular moment. Indians, Chinese, Canadians, Peruvians, Swedes, all of them gave the deep emotional response.' Another parallel, even more exact, is described by Paget Wilkes.<sup>3</sup> A Japanese Christian woman tells of the occasion at the age of fifteen when she was first drawn to Christianity. She attended a meeting at which an English missionary was speaking. She said, 'I understood not a word of what he was talking about, but the sight of his face, the joy of his countenance, so convicted me, that I vowed I would never rest till I found the salvation of the Lord.'

9-11. The people mentioned here were mostly

<sup>1</sup> H. H. Wendt, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Meyers Commentar).

<sup>2</sup> In *The Spirit* edited by Streeter, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *The Dynamic of Service*, p. 150.

Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from  
11 Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and  
Arabians, we do hear them speaking in our  
12 tongues the mighty works of God. And they  
were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying  
13 one to another, What meaneth this? But  
others mocking said, They are filled with new  
wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted

Jewish by birth ; for it must be remembered that by the time of our Lord the Jews had scattered all over the world, and there were actually more Jews in Egypt alone than in Palestine. But wherever they went the Jews made converts, who if they accepted circumcision and all the obligations of the law were called proselytes and were admitted to all the privileges of the Jews. So that this gathering must have included many proselytes from other nations as well as men of Jewish birth.

14-36. St. Peter's Speech. The Dispensation of the Spirit, looked forward to in certain parts of the Old Testament had now begun. St. Peter explained the outburst of tongues as one of the signs of the new spiritual dispensation. He then went on to explain how and why the age of the Spirit had now at length arrived. In accordance with a purpose of God made long ago, the wickedness of men was allowed to bring about the death of Jesus, although the mighty works which had been done by Jesus showed that God was with Him and approved of

up his voice, and spake forth unto them, *saying*,  
Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at  
Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give  
ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, **15**  
as ye suppose ; seeing it is *but* the third hour

Him. Having slain the body of Jesus wicked men could do no more, and even the grave with all its pains and powers could not bar Him in. Not only did He rise to life but He was exalted to the right hand of God, and there claimed the fulfilment of God's promise to pour out the Holy Spirit on mankind. St. Peter concludes by declaring that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. From our Lord's own sayings we might gather that the title of Messiah was not properly His till the completion of His work. It is difficult to think that the same is true of the title Lord ; for we believe that during His ministry and indeed from all time He was Lord, both in the sense of ' Master ' and in the sense of ' God.' The meaning of St. Peter probably is, not that Jesus became Lord by the resurrection and ascension, but was thereby declared and shown to be Lord. He was, as St. Paul said later, ' powerfully declared to be (or " marked off as ") Son of God by the resurrection from the dead ' (Rom. i. 4).

19, 20. In these verses the prophet Joel foretold celestial signs accompanying the great day. To understand such a prophecy we have to put ourselves back into the position of the ancients, who, not knowing that the stars and planets were suns and worlds

16 of the day ; but this is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel ;

17 And it shall be in the last days, saith God,

I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh :

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

And your young men shall see visions,

And your old men shall dream dreams :

greater than our own, thought that they were appendages of the Earth made solely for the benefit of dwellers on the Earth. This idea is reflected in Gen. i. where it says that the heavenly lights were for 'signs' as well as to divide the seasons. Eclipses of the sun or moon, comets and shooting stars, have always filled the mind of unsophisticated man with alarm, as it seemed that the whole world order was being disturbed. In the early years of the Abbasid rule there were great showers of shooting stars, and Moslems reckoned that the end of the age was near. Their hopes for the future were roused, and they looked for the coming of the Mahdi, the 'Guided of God.'<sup>1</sup> For the modern scientific mind it is impossible to associate movements of other heavenly bodies, with the doings of men on Earth. And for Christians it is impossible to associate such material events

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, *Muslim Theology, etc.*, p. 34.

Yea and on my servants and on my hand- 18  
maidens in those days

Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they  
shall prophesy.

And I will shew wonders in the heaven 19  
above,

And signs on the earth beneath;

Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, 20

And the moon into blood,

Before the day of the Lord come,

That great and notable *day*:

And it shall be, that whosoever shall call 21  
on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of 22

with spiritual experiences. St. Peter shows at once the spiritual interpretation that a Christian must put on such a prophecy as that of Joel. For St. Peter the spiritual upheaval of the day of Pentecost was a fulfilment of the prophecy of the darkening of sun and moon and the heavenly and earthly signs of blood, fire and smoke. Many people, not only Hindus, but also Christians, believe in astrology, that is, the primitive notion that the actions of men are controlled by the movements of the heavenly bodies. They should be taught that such a belief is not only foolish and contrary to all scientific knowledge, but also a denial of the providence of God.

22. It is perhaps strange that this verse and x. 38



Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, even as  
23 ye yourselves know ; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did

are the only references in the New Testament outside the Gospels to our Lord's ministry of miracles. We are apt to speak as if the deity of Christ depends upon the truth of the miracles He performed. For Him it was not so : the performance of miracles was a natural thing for one who was living close to God, and was to be expected of the disciples—'greater works than these shall he do' (John xiv. 12). The disciples therefore apparently did not lay any great stress on our Lord's miracles. But they did lay the greatest stress on His resurrection, not as something that He had done, but as marking God's approval and acceptance of Him.

23. Lawless men did crucify and slay. The number of references to our Lord's death is very great. Compare iii. 15 'killed'; v. 30 'whom ye slew'; vii. 52 'murderers'; 1 Thess. ii. 15 'who killed the Lord Jesus'; Rev. v. 9 'for thou wast slain.' From the earliest to the latest books of the New Testament His death is the recurrent theme, because His death is the means of life to the world as foreseen long ago in Isa. liii and because without the certainty of His death there would be no meaning in His resurrection. The apostles in their early speeches

crucify and slay : whom God raised up, having<sup>24</sup>  
loosed the pangs of death : because it was not  
possible that he should be holden of it. For<sup>25</sup>  
David saith concerning him,

I beheld the Lord always before my face ;  
For he is on my right hand, that I should  
not be moved :

as recorded in this book made constant reference to it. St. John in his Gospel calls God to solemn witness of the truth that His side was pierced and blood and water flowed out. There is no doubt of the fact anywhere hinted at in the New Testament ; nor was any doubt expressed by any one till the Docetic heresy, which taught that Christ was not really man, that His manhood was only in appearance and that being God He could not have died upon the cross. It is clear that the Docetists never pretended to have any historical evidence for such a statement, but rested it entirely on their incorrect theory of the nature of our Lord. Somehow this heretical notion become known to Muhammed, and so finds place in the Quran<sup>1</sup> (Sura iv. 156) and consequently is commonly believed by Moslems. In dealing with Moslems it is therefore necessary to present the overwhelming historical evidence for the fact of the death of Christ upon the cross, without which any teaching about His

<sup>1</sup> ' And for their saying, " Verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus the Son of Mary, an Apostle of God." Yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness.'

- 26      Therefore my heart was glad, and my  
         tongue rejoiced ;  
         Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in  
         hope :
- 27      Because thou wilt not leave my soul in  
         Hades,  
         Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to  
         see corruption.

resurrection or His atonement would have no meaning to them. The apostles' creed emphasizes the fact four times, ' crucified, dead, buried, descended to the place of departed spirits.' As surely as the Muharram festival year by year is evidence that Hussain was slain on the plains of Kerbala, so surely the continual celebration of the Eucharist from the earliest times up to the present day as a continual memorial of His death is evidence of the crucifixion of our Lord.<sup>1</sup> Tertullian (de Carne v) protesting against Marcion's denial of the death of Christ, exclaimed, ' O spare the one hope of the whole world ! '

25-28. The argument for the resurrection contained in this Psalm—one of the very few places in the Old Testament which speaks of the resurrection—is very striking. The righteous one is so near to God that he cannot be separated from God and therefore he cannot be held in the darkness of the grave. The word ' Hades ' is a Greek word denoting that heathen

<sup>1</sup> An illustration given by Dr. Zwemer at Mussoorie Convention 1924.

Thou madest known unto me the ways of 28  
life ;  
Thou shalt make me full of gladness with  
thy countenance.

idea of the dark place below the earth where the souls of the dead were thought to be imprisoned. The word is used to translate the Hebrew word 'She'ol', which had a similar meaning among the Jews before the revelation of the resurrection was given to them. The argument of the psalmist obviously applies to Christ because of His perfect sinlessness. It applies to us in so far as our sins are done away and we are brought into communion with Him.

25. A good many of the Psalms are headed 'To David.' Among them are Ps. xvi quoted here, and Ps. cx quoted in verse 34. It is usually supposed that our present psalter was compiled from various earlier collections, one of which was entitled 'To David.' It is not certain whether this title was a claim to Davidic authorship, or whether the collection was merely dedicated to David. Some of the Psalms in the collection may certainly have been written by him. But there is no reason to suppose that all the psalms in our Psalter were written by David, although at various times that has been thought to be the case. St. Peter's use of Ps. xvi here does not depend upon Davidic authorship: it would be an equally good prophecy of the resurrection whoever wrote it. Our Lord's use of Ps. cx in Mark xii. 36 is rather different; and many people have felt that, as His argument depended upon Davidic authorship, there could be no

- 29** Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day.
- 30** Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that

question about it. We are not sure however whether our Lord's self-emptying at the Incarnation included a limitation of His earthly knowledge. We feel certain that He could make no mistake in deciding a moral issue, or in stating any religious idea ; but it is not so certain whether He used His almighty power to secure infallibility on unimportant questions of history and the like.

29. St. Peter says that David's prophecy about the resurrection could not refer to himself, but must have some future reference, for David died and was buried and there had never been any suggestion that he had risen again.

30, 31. Being therefore a prophet and . . . seeing beforehand he spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ that He was not left in Hades, neither did His flesh see corruption. The Jews with the exception of the Sadducees had believed in the resurrection of the dead for a long time. As there was little support for the belief to be found in the Old Testament they no doubt soon collected and treasured such passages as this one from Ps. xvi. Though for about two centuries the belief in the resurrection had been current, yet no one had been known to have attained to the resurrection. It was therefore natural for St. Peter, when he was bearing witness to the resurrection of Jesus, to claim it is a fulfilment of

God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set *one* upon his throne ; he foreseeing *this* spake of the resurrec- 31  
tion of the Christ, that neither was he left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This 32  
Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are

the Psalmist's words. We sometimes find it difficult to understand the attitude of New Testament and early Christian writers towards prophecy. And the fault is not altogether on their side. St. Peter says, for instance, here that it was because the prophet was looking forward that he spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ. St. Peter gives the impression that the words spoken referred simply and solely to Christ and had no other reference whatever. We, on the other hand, are inclined to say that he was preaching the resurrection of all good men, and it was fulfilled first in Christ because Christ was good. Now although this latter explanation is undoubtedly correct, there is one point that we are apt to forget : the Hebrew was a practical man ; his language had few abstract terms ; so instead of saying ' There will be a resurrection of the righteous dead ' he was much more inclined to say ' The righteous man will rise from the grave,' describing in the person of one man what will be the experience of many. And it is for this reason that the ancients were able to refer such a prophecy to Christ, and forget that it was intended for all the righteous. A similar instance is considered in the note on iii. 13.

**33** witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath  
**34** poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

**35** Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

**36** Let all the house of Israel, therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

**33. By the right hand of God exalted.** For a discussion of the Ascension of Christ see the note on i. 9-11.

**34.** Psalm cx. from which this is quoted, is a prophetic one looking forward to the Messianic king. The first line means 'The Lord (i.e. God) said unto my lord (i.e. the Messiah), sit thou on my right hand, etc.' The two words for 'Lord' are different: the first stands for Yahweh a name only applied to God; the second is a word which may be applied either to God or man. Christ quoted the passage (Mark xii. 36 and parallels in Matthew and Luke), asking the Jews how David could speak of his descendant, the Messiah, as 'my lord.' St. Peter uses it here with reference to the ascension, that God had caused the Messiah to sit at His right hand.



Now when they heard *this*, they were prick-<sup>37</sup>  
ed in their heart, and said unto Peter and the  
rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we  
do? And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye,<sup>38</sup>

38. St. Peter's advice to those who wished to follow Christ was clear-cut. They must repent, they must be baptized in order to receive remission of their sins, and then they will receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism was a rite well known among Jews, though the exact details of its use are not clear, for it was a development since Old Testament times. Particularly it seems that converts to Judaism were baptized after their circumcision. When John the Baptist came he demanded baptism of those who were already Jews, and associated baptism with repentance. This was a natural inference from the various ceremonial washings commanded in the Old Testament for purification. Our Lord Himself was baptized at the hands of John, and His disciples also baptized a large number of people (John iii. 22-26, iv. 1, 2). The fact that Jesus followed John the Baptist in the practice of baptism, seems to indicate that baptism as administered by Jesus, like that of John, was connected with the remission of sins. The expression in John iv. 1 'He makes and baptizes more disciples than John' shows that this baptism by Jesus, or rather by His disciples, was an inauguration, into discipleship. There is every reason to believe that in spite of the silence of the synoptic gospels St. John records a true tradition in his gospel, when

and be baptized every one of you in the name

he traces back the origin of Christian baptism to the days of our Lord's ministry ; and all the more because he draws the distinction that in those days there was no gift of the Holy Spirit, 'the Spirit was not yet (given) because Jesus was not yet glorified,' John vii. 39, for this agrees with our Lord's words recorded in Acts i. 5, that the baptism of the Spirit was to take place after His ascension, 'John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with Holy Spirit not many days hence.' In his gospel (xxiv. 47) St. Luke has recorded that our Lord had bidden the disciples preach to all nations in His name 'repentance unto remission of sins.' Although this says nothing about baptism it fits in well with what St. Luke wrote in Acts i. 5. In St. Matthew we find our Lord reported as saying, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt. xxviii. 19). The authenticity of this text has been attacked, and though there is no serious ground for doubting it, the mere fact of such an attack having been made has brought the text under general suspicion. The grounds of the attack are two : (1) certain early Christian writers quote the preceding verses, without quoting those words, suggesting that they were missing from their copies of the Gospels. Not only are the words in every extant copy of the Gospels, but Dr. Chase has conclusively shown that the fathers in question simply omitted the words because they did not bear on their argument. (2) It

of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ;

is doubted whether our Lord would have commanded the use of any formula for baptism, and whether He would have used a Trinitarian formula. The answer to this probably is that if the words represent the substance of what Jesus said they were not a formula, although later Christians through reading St. Matthew's gospel very naturally adopted them as a formula. If the words were not originally a formula, were they an appropriate description of Christian baptism? The name of Jesus was the most frequent name in all the apostolic teaching, and Christian baptism must have been thought of in the first place as an introduction into the fellowship of Christ. This is what we find frequently in the Acts, that people are said to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Further as we have seen baptism since the Ascension was marked by gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Christ's own description was 'Ye shall be baptized in Holy Spirit.' For Jews who became Christians it would then be sufficient description to say that they were baptized into Christ and the Holy Spirit, but the farewell words of our Lord were looking beyond the circle of Judaism to 'all the nations,' people who had not necessarily acknowledged the one God and Father of us all. The full description of Christian baptism therefore necessitated the mention of God the Father side by side with the mention of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The description of baptism given in Matt. xxviii. 19 is absolutely appropriate; quite apart from the development

and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the whole case against that verse, which supposes that it reflects later theological ideas, falls to the ground. Thus we see how it was that in several cases in the Acts the Trinitarian formula seems not to have been used at baptism ; and on the other hand that words originally uttered by our Lord, being perfectly in accord with the significance of baptism, and also agreeing with the doctrine of the Trinity, were very soon adopted as the universal formula at baptism. The question has recently been raised in India whether baptism is really essential, for a Hindu is allowed by his co-religionists to consort with Christians without losing the position he has in the Hindu social system ; but the moment he is baptized he is outcasted and suffers ostracism and persecution. People are therefore asking whether a man may not become a worshipper of Christ and receive the spiritual gifts without going through the formality which cuts him off from his family. Plausible as this argument may sound at first there are very strong arguments against encouraging such a thing. Apart from our Lord's definite command to baptize, we believe that baptism is not a mere formality but is a means of grace and we have no promise that the gift will be granted in any other way. The very fact that a man who is not baptized is not cut off from the Hindu social system means that the influences of Hinduism are still strong with him, and for this reason, the advice of St. Peter is still necessary (ii. 40) 'Save yourselves from this

For to you is the promise, and to your children, **39**  
and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the  
Lord our God shall call unto him. And with **40**  
many other words he testified, and exhorted  
them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked  
generation. They then that received his word **41**

crooked generation,' i.e., from a society with perverted ideas of God and morals. It may be said that by remaining in his family the man will be able easier to influence his people to accept Christianity. There may be some measure of truth in this, but yet a man, who is not sufficiently impressed by the uniqueness of Christ to wish to declare publicly his adherence to the Christian religion, is not likely to set before his people the highest ideal of Christianity. Moreover, we probably underestimate the effect upon Hindus of the force of the religion which will make a man leave his family and position and all that he has for the sake of Christ.

39. It is seen that from the very earliest days the apostles recognized the universality of the Gospel. St. Peter was speaking to the Jews and proselytes when he said that the promise was for them and for their children and for all afar off as many as God would call. Judaism had in those days become a proselytizing religion, and Christianity was from the first ready to be at least as wide. The question that had yet to be settled, which became a serious crisis in the history of the Church, was not whether Gentiles should be included in the Church, but whether they

were baptized : and there were added *unto them* in  
42 that day about three thousand souls. And they

must first accept all the obligations of the Jewish law. See further the chapter in the Introduction 'Did Jesus found a Universal Religion ?'

42. This verse is very important as indicating the nature of the life of the infant community. Four points have been selected for special mention, points in which the disciples were marked off from other Jews. (1) The standard of doctrine was the teaching of the apostles. Obviously the early Christians held by the scriptures of the Old Testament, but these were capable of many different interpretations. Among the Jews they were interpreted according to the traditions, i.e., the authoritative commentary and expansion of the law as given by well-known Rabbis. Christ however had taught a new method of interpreting the Old Testament, by bringing every command or statement into relationship with our inner light, our conscience, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. This is well seen in His interpretation of the sixth and seventh commandments, and of the law of the Sabbath. The apostles, who had been very close to the Lord were able to indicate the true lines of interpretation ; and their teaching was therefore accepted as the authoritative standard. (2) The teaching of our Lord about the Fatherhood of God, with the natural corollary of the brotherhood of men, had had already a marked effect upon the early disciples. They felt themselves to be one family, inspired by one spirit, living one life. The idea of sects or

continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching

divisions, so familiar among the Jews, seemed impossible in that early brotherhood. The word chosen to express this fact—for it was a fact of experience and not only an idea in the mind—was 'the fellowship.' (3) A sign of the common life shared between all the disciples was having their meals together. With the rapidly increasing numbers it was obviously impossible for long for all of the disciples to eat together in the one upper room. Verse 46 says that they broke bread 'at home', to distinguish it from their gatherings in the temple courts for prayer. No doubt the larger rooms available were used for the purpose so that at any rate two or three families could 'break bread' together. It seems that the term 'breaking of bread' included a regular meal, as well as that particular part of it which obeyed the injunction of our Lord 'Do this as my memorial.' The term 'Lord's Supper' used by St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 20) also seems to have included both the meal and the commemoration. As time went on, the two seem to have been separated, the social meal being called the Agape; and the memorial of the death of Christ remained as the sacrament of the Holy Communion or Eucharist as we now know and use it. We are not certain how often they observed the 'Breaking of Bread' at first: the words 'day by day' in ii. 46 may refer only to the temple prayers, or also to the Breaking of Bread. At any rate, the practical difficulties of men and women with their daily work meeting daily for a celebration which probably lasted several hours



and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

must have soon restricted the observance to the Lord's Day. In xx. 7 we read that they met for the Breaking of Bread on the first day of the week, and this custom has generally been observed by the Church. (4) The last mark of the community was the prayers. Verse 46 speaks of their regular attendance at the temple ; but we can be fairly sure that they met in their own houses also for prayer, in twos and threes, and alone, remembering the promise of our Lord to answer the prayers where two or three were gathered together in His name, and also His injunction to pray in an inner room so as to avoid the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

It may be well to examine the marks of the Church of the present day to compare it with these four marks of the primitive Church. (1) The same principle which made the early Christians follow the teaching of the apostles, because they had been near to Christ, should make us careful to follow the teaching of the New Testament as it has been understood by the many generations of faithful servants of Christ. While ever seeking for new knowledge about Christ to add to the store which the Church already possesses, we should be very chary of accepting anything which contradicts that store of teaching, believing that on the whole the Church has been rightly guided into the truth. (2) In fellowship we are sadly lacking to-day. The word does not merely express friendly sentiments towards one another, but a concrete fact

And fear came upon every soul : and many **43**  
wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

of brotherhood. The divided Church of the present day is the greatest sign of its weakness ; and we are bound as Christians to work for restoration of the fellowship and reunion of the broken parts. (3) Our own branch of the Church has been more faithful than some of the Protestant bodies in the observance of the sacramental life centring particularly in the Breaking of Bread. We ought to hold fast by this heritage of ours, making full use of it ourselves, and when any scheme for Church reunion is considered to present this sacramental observance as our contribution to the reunited Church. (4) However faithful our prayers may be we need to remind ourselves that communion with God in prayer is the very basis of religion, and no community can be truly religious unless its members are living the life of prayer.

43. If the apostles had organized the three thousand into an armed band we would have understood the fear of the multitude. But why should they have feared so orderly and harmless a set of people ? One is reminded of the fear of men prophesied by Isaiah, ch. ii, in the great day when the Lord would arise to shake mightily the earth, and men would hide in the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the ragged rocks. The Jews in the days of Pentecost realized that some new power had entered into their midst ; its reality was attested by the mighty works wrought by the hands of the apostles ; what it was they knew not ; but they knew that they had no part in it, and

44 And all that believed were together, and had  
45 all things common ; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, accord-

were indeed arrayed against it. Naturally they were filled with dread in face of this unknown power, more than they would have been in the face of three thousand swords whose strength they could estimate. Above all, this dread was felt by those who were the leaders of the Jews, and knew themselves to be guilty of the death of Jesus.

44. At first sight this verse gives the impression that the early Christians practised a kind of communism, in which all their possessions were held in common ; and this appears to be stated even more emphatically in iv. 32. There is reason to think however that these words are intended to express rather the spirit of brotherhood pervading the community than any definitely socialistic scheme of pooling their property. For we find that the sale of Barnabas's field, and the gift of the proceeds to the apostles, is specially referred to as if it were an exceptionally generous gift. St. Peter told Ananias and Sapphira that they had been under no compulsion to give their property. And we also find that Mary the mother of John Mark still possessed her house a few years later (xii. 12). It is suggested very plausibly by Wendt that the apostles sold up their Galilean property, and put the proceeds at the disposal of the little community. It is rather hard to picture the economic condition of the community. The apostles at any rate had left their work, of fishing, tax-gathering,

ing as any man had need. And day by day, 46 continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all 47 the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.

or whatever it was in each case, and had no income. Some of the converts were people from overseas who had no trade in Jerusalem. Others had their trade in the city, but of them some would doubtless neglect or abandon their daily work under the stress of excitement, and particularly if they were expecting the early return of the Lord. The needs of the community must therefore have been considerable, and it is not surprising that they soon used up the capital that was placed at their disposal so that the famine of A.D. 47 found them in a state of serious poverty.

46, 47. In contrast with the fear that filled the hearts of those who were outside the Christian movement, a great peace and joy filled the believers. Communion with God, the triumph of their Master Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of all their highest hopes, and the daily expectation of the glorious kingdom of heaven, gave them an inexpressible gladness and lightness of heart. The Jews, worshipping a God far off, wore long faces, and performed their religious duties with a sad seriousness. It has been said of the Marathi mystic poet Tukaram that ' Despite occasional

**31** Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth

ecstasy, the note of sustained joy is conspicuous by its absence, and his experience is mostly that of "the dark night of the soul."'<sup>1</sup> But the disciples were like the bridegroom's friends, who rejoiced in the presence of the bridegroom. It was natural that the mass of the Jewish people (excepting those who were definitely opposed to Christianity and realized that it was a force which would overthrow their time-honoured traditions) were favourably inclined towards the disciples who combined faithful observance of the law with happy faces. Many of such Jews were willing to accept the gospel; their salvation was being secured; and daily they enrolled themselves in the number of the disciples.

*Difficulties within and without the Church iii-v*

iii. 1-iv. 31. We are here introduced for the first time to the conflict of Christianity with the world. The conflict sets out clearly the distinctive things in Christianity in which the world has no part, and which therefore rouse the world to antagonism. Peter and John were on their way to attend the afternoon sacrifice at the temple, their hearts filled with that joy and gladness which was characteristic of the first disciples. As they came to the Beautiful Gate of Nikanor, bedecked with brass and gilt, by

<sup>1</sup> Fraser and Edwards, *Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, p. 255.

*hour.* And a certain man that was lame from 2  
his mother's womb was carried, whom they  
laid daily at the door of the temple which is  
called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that  
entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and 3  
John about to go into the temple, asked to

which one entered the Court of the Women from the eastern side, they were struck by a sight strangely out of harmony with the gladness of their hearts and the beauty of the gate. Often before they must have seen the poor cripple, for he was carried daily to that spot; no doubt they had often thrown coins to him; but never before had they felt the incongruity of such suffering with God's beautiful world. Gautama Buddha under similar circumstances, when he first realized the pains and sorrows of the world, was convinced of the transitoriness of things and driven to a life of asceticism as an escape from the world of sense. The reaction on the Christian apostles was very different. Such suffering, they thought, has no place in this world, in this age of Messiah's rule. They called to mind how Jesus Himself had healed the maimed and sick. Almost quicker than thought they were convinced that the power of Jesus which was with them would remove this blot on a fair scene. We are not told that the cripple had faith in Jesus: it was the apostles who showed faith, faith that the power which had gone forth from Jesus during His ministry was still with His disciples. The certainty of Peter that the lame man would walk

4 receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.  
5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to  
6 receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus

when the command was uttered in the name of Jesus may be contrasted with the questioning attitude of Elisha when he smote the waters of Jordan with Elijah's cloak to see whether they would divide. St. Peter's certainty was the moral certainty, that the disciples were commissioned to carry on in the world the work that Jesus had begun. When challenged as to the healing of the cripple St. Peter had no difficulty in giving the explanation : the ' name of Jesus ', i.e. all that Jesus stood for, was the power that was at work. He was the Servant of the Lord, foretold by the prophet, who had borne the sufferings and sins of men ; that path of suffering was the way of life, and Jesus was the leader along that road, so that it was natural that life proceeded from Him and that the cripple had received from Him perfect soundness. Moreover this life proceeding from Him was not only physical but spiritual, bringing deliverance from sin. St. Peter therefore urged the people to accept this blessing as the fulfilment of all the ancient hopes of their nation.

The result of such an experience of life-giving power—for it was more than mere teaching—was that many enrolled themselves as Christians, and the



Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him<sup>7</sup> by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and<sup>8</sup> began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising

number that formerly had been reckoned at three thousand had now risen to five thousand. They sprang to life in response to the life-giving power just as the earth brings forth all its green carpet in response to the rains. But just as the same rain washes the dust from the hard rock, and exposes a black dead surface on which nothing will grow, so the coming of the life-giving power exposed the great black masses of irreligion, the men whose minds were set on this world and had no thought for the things of life. It is not surprising that these men whose faces were set against the life-giving power were the sect of the Sadducees who disbelieved in the resurrection.

Annas who had been deposed from the high-priesthood in A.D. 15, Caiaphas the actual High Priest, and their relatives, called collectively 'the high priests,' all of them Sadducees, were the party that caused the arrest of the apostles. Their disgust that the resurrection should be preached at all, and especially that it should be coupled with the name of Jesus whom by trickery they had done to death, roused them into active opposition of the Christian movement. It had been by the capricious fortunes of

9 God. And all the people saw him walking and  
10 praising God : and they took knowledge of him,  
that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple : and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

politics that the Sadducean party had risen to hold the office of the priesthood, which they, almost agnostic and altogether worldly as they were, were least fitted to fill. Our Lord had said but little about the Sadducees. He was a Physician sent to heal the sick, not the dead. The Pharisees were sick indeed : the fervent religion which their ancestors the Hasidim had given their lives for, the burning devotion to the law, was encrusted with the trivialities and ritualism which were the result of misdirected zeal—a zeal directed towards God but not according to knowledge. Against them our Lord delivered sledge-hammer blows to break the hard crust within which their religious life was concealed. And from them came Paul and many another Christian. But to the Sadducees our Lord said little. They were dead. In them was nothing to respond to the words of life. It is pathetic hearing them demand by what power the apostles had done the work of healing, for in their lives the power of love had no free course, their very minds were closed to every impulse of the higher life. It was a good deed, St. Peter replied, of which they demanded the cause : and they had no power to discern the good ; they had slain Him in whom all

And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

goodness rested ; they had cast on the rubbish heap the stone whose shape they could not understand, the stone which was fitted for the highest place, at the corner, supporting the whole structure ; they did not understand the desperate need of all men for salvation, and how could they understand the One through whom salvation comes ? They looked again at Peter and John, men untaught in the rabbinic schools, nor connected in any way with the official classes, in fact in their eyes absolutely illiterate—how could any good thing come from such outsiders ? From the apostles they turned their gaze upon the cripple, who was a cripple no longer, standing before them, an undeniable fact. And from both the apostles and the cripple their minds went back to the Man whom they had put to death, and with undefinable terror they recalled that these men were His disciples. Yet the thought of Jesus had no moral effect on them. With utter blindness to the things that have real power they threatened to bring all the might of their high-priestly office to bear upon the offenders. It was like the Tibetans donning devil masks to frighten the British military expedition. As well might the hard rock, jealous of the verdure of the soil, adjure the clouds to withhold their life-giving rain.

So the apostles returned to their own company. And there with a song of thankfulness they meditated on the Lord, the Creator of all things, stretching out

**12** And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had

His loving hand to heal, and opposed to Him in futile opposition raging Gentiles and Gentile-hearted Jews. They had no need to pray that the Lord's cause would prosper against such feeble adversaries. All their prayer was that they themselves might have the boldness to stand on the Lord's side nothing wavering. And at their words the very house shook with emotion; they knew that the powers of nature itself were arrayed on their side against the foolish threatenings of the ungodly; they were filled again as at Pentecost with the power of the Spirit and they spoke the word with boldness.

2. The word 'was carried' should have been translated 'used to be carried', that is every morning and evening. The gate Beautiful is not known elsewhere by that name, but is probably the gate described by Josephus on the east side of the Court of the Women. This court was so called because Jewish women were allowed to enter there, but not into the next court which was reserved for Jewish men. In the centre was the temple itself. Into the Most Holy Place only the High Priest might enter, into the Holy Place priests, into the next court Jewish men, the next Jewish women, the next Gentiles. Thus the false idea of different grades of religious privilege was emphasized in the Jewish temple. The idea of

made him to walk ? The God of Abraham, and **13** of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus ; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him.

the spiritual inferiority of women is even retained by the Jews to the present day in the daily thanksgiving of the men ' Blessed art thou O Lord God, king of the Universe, who has not made me a woman.' Similar ideas are held by Moslems and Hindus. It was Christ who first taught the world the equality of religious privilege of all mankind. Outside the Court of the Gentiles was a verandah, the eastern side of which (mentioned in iii. 11, v. 12) was called Solomon's Porch. From the north-west corner of the court a flight of stairs (xxi. 35) led up to the Castle Antonia (xxi. 34) occupied by a Roman garrison.

13. In this passage, and also in iii. 26, iv. 27, 30, we find Christ spoken of as Servant. The Greek word is literally ' boy ', but was used (as the word is in Anglo-Indian vocabulary) for ' servant '. It comes in the passage read by our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth, ' Behold my Servant whom I have chosen, etc.' Matt. xii. 18 quoting Isa. xlii. 1-4. We have here so important a connexion between the Old Testament and the New Testament that it must be considered in detail. In the writings known to us nowadays as those of the Second Isaiah (Isa. xl-lv) a conception is developed of a character who suffers willingly on behalf of others, who is named the

14 But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One,  
and asked for a murderer to be granted unto

Servant of the Lord. Although there have been many opinions on the subject, the present author believes it to be proved conclusively that wherever the title occurs in Second Isaiah it refers to the nation of Israel.<sup>1</sup> But with that habit of mind spoken of in the note on ii. 30, 31, the prophet found it easier to clothe his ideas of what Israel ought to be and was to become, by depicting the Servant as though an individual were intended. So completely did he do this, that by the time we come to the great fifty-third chapter the Servant is so individualized that it is hard to remember that the author is still setting an ideal for the whole race of Israel. We do not know whether, when Christ entered the synagogue, He read the chapter ordinarily appointed for that sabbath, or whether He deliberately chose the passage about the Servant. But we do know that He was perfectly justified in claiming that the words He had read were fulfilled in Him. For in Him that character of self-sacrifice which Second Isaiah had conceived, was at last fulfilled. We can put this truth in a more general form thus: whatever true and noble ideals have ever entered into the minds of men are fulfilled in Christ, because He is perfect; so that, no matter in what connexion those ideals were conceived in the mind of the author, they may be referred most justly to Christ. The apostles accepted our Lord's statement

<sup>1</sup> See L. E. Browne, *Early Judaism*, ch. i.

you, and killed the Prince of life ; whom God **15**  
raised from the dead ; whereof we are witness-  
es. And by faith in his name hath his name **16**  
made this man strong, whom ye behold and  
know : yea, the faith which is through him  
hath given him this perfect soundness in the  
presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot **17**  
that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your

that the prophecy about the Servant was fulfilled in Him, for they saw that the description of the Servant was a faithful portrayal of Christ's character. Thus when the eunuch in Acts viii. 34 asked Philip who was referred to in one of the Servant passages, Philip without any hesitation answered that it referred to Jesus. The fuller light on the method of Old Testament prophecy, which we now enjoy, does not prevent us from agreeing with Philip. But we also see that Second Isaiah had in mind the idea that the whole nation of Israel was to have the self-sacrificing character of the Servant of the Lord ; and this leads us to the great idea that Christ, in showing forth the character of the Servant, was the first-fruits among many brethren, and that the whole Christian family is intended to attain to that same ideal character.

**15. Prince.** The word so translated meant primarily 'leader' and should so be translated here. Only in a secondary sense did it come to mean 'captain'. Christ led the way of life that we are to follow.

**17. I wot.** An obsolete English word meaning 'I know'.



**18** rulers. But the things which God foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ **19** should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may

**18. That His Christ should suffer.** In the Old Testament, starting from the time of Isaiah, and in the other Jewish writings before the time of Christ there was developed the idea of a king Messiah who should come to be the perfect ruler over Israel. The Hebrew word 'māshiah', 'Anointed One', was represented in Greek either by the form 'Messias' or by a translation 'Christos', the Greek word for 'Anointed'. The Messiah before the time of our Lord was always represented as victorious and triumphant. But there was also in the Old Testament, in the writings of the Second Isaiah, the conception of the Servant of the Lord who was to come to his triumph through suffering on behalf of others. It was only when Jesus the Messiah was seen suffering on the cross and reigning in the triumph of the resurrection that it became possible to combine the two ideas of Messiah and Suffering Servant. In some non-Christian Jewish writings we find the expression 'Suffering Messiah', but it is believed that these references are all post-Christian, and that the idea was learnt from the Christians. The Christians from the beginning spoke of Jesus as 'the Christ'. It was probably only gradually that they dropped the article 'the' and began to use 'Christ' as a proper name of Jesus.

be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord ; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus : whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began. Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me ; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul, which shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the

19-21. Although Jesus had been recognized as the Messiah it was clear that His final triumph was yet in the future. The kingdom was coming, but not yet fully come. The disciples while working for the extension of the kingdom on earth, were looking forward to the triumphant return of Jesus, who would then be manifested as Messiah to all mankind, and the sway of righteousness and holiness would be fully established.

22, 23. Quoted freely from Deut. xviii. 15-19, the

covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall  
26 all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

41 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the  
2 Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.  
3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now even-  
4 tide. But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

last words being a common expression borrowed from Lev. xxiii. 29 and other places. The clumsy form in which books were made in those days—a long strip of parchment on two rollers—made it laborious to look up a passage, with the result that short quotations were usually made from memory. This is the main reason why Old Testament quotations in the New Testament show frequent verbal differences from the Old Testament as we now know it.

1. **The captain of the temple** was not a military officer, but a priest, next in rank after the high priest, who was responsible for good order in the temple

And it came to pass on the morrow, that 5  
their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered  
together in Jerusalem ; and Annas the high 6  
priest *was there*, and Caiaphas, and John, and  
Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred  
of the high priest. And when they had set 7  
them in the midst, they inquired, By what  
power, or in what name, have ye done this ?  
Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said 8  
unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders,  
if we this day are examined concerning a good 9  
deed done to an impotent man, by what means  
this man is made whole ; be it known unto you 10  
all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the  
name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye  
crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even*  
in him doth this man stand here before you  
whole. He is the stone which was set at 11  
nought of you the builders, which was made

courts. The excuse for his intervention was the  
concourse of people which had come together after  
the miracle. But the real reason was that he, like  
the others with him, was a Sadducee, and therefore  
opposed to the Christian movement.

6. John and Alexander are not known from other  
sources. The Bezan text may be correct in substitut-  
ing 'Jonathan' for 'John' as Annas had a son of  
that name.

- 12** the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.
- 13** Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had
- 14** been with Jesus. And seeing the man which was healed standing with them, they could say
- 15** nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council,
- 16** they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem;

12. We learn from this verse that salvation is to be attained by means of the name of Jesus, and not by means of any other name. Seeing that salvation—from sin, ignorance and suffering—is the great need of all mankind it is well to ask exactly what is meant by salvation by means of a name or in a name. We may notice first that the name of an object is often confused with the object itself, a fact which is witnessed to by the usage of some languages, e.g., the Greek *ῥῆμα* and the Hindustani *بات* both mean either 'word' or 'thing.' With this tendency of the human mind, it is not surprising to find that the Hebrews treated the name of God as if it was much more than

and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no **17**  
further among the people, let us threaten them,  
that they speak henceforth to no man in this  
name. And they called them, and charged **18**  
them not to speak at all nor teach in the name  
of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and **19**  
said unto them, Whether it be right in the  
sight of God to hearken unto you rather than  
unto God, judge ye : for we cannot but speak **20**  
the things which we saw and heard. And they, **21**  
when they had further threatened them, let  
them go, finding nothing how they might  
punish them, because of the people ; for all  
men glorified God for that which was done.  
For the man was more than forty years old, on **22**  
whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

a mere word. In Exod. xxiii. 20, 21 we read, ' Behold  
I send an angel before thee. . . . Take ye heed of  
him . . . for my name is in him ', and in Isa. xxx. 27

' Behold the name of Yahweh cometh from far.' In  
these instances the name of God is very much like  
God Himself, though perhaps with the additional idea  
of God as revealed to men. In later times the Jews  
used other similar expressions by way of referring  
somewhat indirectly to God, e.g., in Targum of  
Onqelos on Gen. iii. 8 we read, ' They heard the  
voice of the word of Yahweh walking in the garden ',  
where the ' word of Yahweh ' simply means Yahweh.  
When therefore we read in Acts iii. 16 that the name

- 23 And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests  
24 and the elders had said unto them. And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the  
25 sea, and all that in them is : who by the Holy Ghost, *by* the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,  
Why did the Gentiles rage,  
And the peoples imagine vain things ?  
26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed :  
27 for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles

of Jesus healed the cripple on the ground of faith in His name, we understand that it was Jesus who had healed him on the ground of faith in Jesus. This use of the expression, ' the name of Jesus ', when a Jew would have most probably said ' the name of the Lord ', shows that even as early in the history of Christianity as this Jesus was beginning to occupy the place in the thought of Christians which would formerly have only been filled by God. When we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, it implies, not a superstitious



and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings : and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

use of the name of God, but an incorporation into God Himself. For superstitious use of the divine name see further the note on xix. 13.

28. **To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.** The Biblical writers were so convinced that all things were in the power of God that they were accustomed to express all actions as the fulfilment of His will. It would have been more accurate to speak of God 'foreknowing' than 'foreordaining' such an event as the crucifixion. For while God never ordains evil, He does grant freedom to men to choose good or evil, so that evil often appears. We cannot strictly speaking say that God purposed that Christ should be crucified ; but, knowing the waywardness of the human soul to whom free will had been granted, He knew that a perfect life like that of Jesus would be visited with death.

- 32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one *of them* said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things  
33 common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them  
34 all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the

32-37. This passage continues and expands the statement of ii. 44, 45 about the attitude of the Christian community towards property. It seems likely that St. Luke understood that all the property was held by the community, and that private property ceased to exist, but that the source from which he gained his information did not really say so much. The special mention of Barnabas's munificent gift certainly suggests that this was regarded as something remarkable. The Galilean apostles would naturally have disposed of their property in Galilee for which they had no further use, but it was more noteworthy if Barnabas sold up a plot of land in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The main point that St. Luke's source makes clear is the unanimity of the 'fellowship': though there was such a multitude of them, in heart and soul they were one, and there was not a single one of them who showed the selfish spirit of saying with regard to his property, 'That is mine.' The apostles particularly bore witness, as

prices of the things that were sold, and laid **35** them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

And Joseph, who by the apostles was sur- **36** named Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, having a field, sold it, and brought the **37** money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

was due from them (such is the force of the Greek word), of the resurrection of Christ. By this we understand not only that they preached about the resurrection, but their behaviour, and the fellowship which they fostered, were witnesses of the new life, the resurrection life which the infant Church enjoyed in fellowship with the risen Lord. Such witness was extraordinarily powerful, and was a sign of a great outpouring of God's grace. The word translated 'grace' expresses the favour and good will of God which came to all of the community. It was a gift which they received from God and showed in their dealings with one another, and also, as we read in ii. 47, it was the mark of their relationship with the non-Christian community. When St. Luke goes on to say in verses 34, 35 that all who had possessions sold them he is apparently generalizing from the instance of Barnabas, and the statement that there was no poor man amongst them is really a quotation from Deut. xv. 4 which spoke of the blessed state of the ideal community of the future.

**5**<sub>1</sub> But a certain man named Ananias, with  
**2** Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept  
back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy  
to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at  
**3** the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias,  
why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the  
Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price  
**4** of the land? Whiles it remained, did it not

1-11. The story of Ananias and Sapphira presents unusual difficulties. The sin of these two persons is clear enough, that they wished to appear before the Christian community as great benefactors and whole-hearted adherents of the new movement, whereas in reality they were intending to share in any advantages that membership of the Christian community might offer, and at the same time insure against complete loss if the movement proved a failure. In the eyes of the Christians the sin was worse than hypocrisy. It was a denial and breach of that fellowship which was one of most conspicuous marks of the Church. Such breach of the fellowship was an affront to the Holy Spirit whose presence in the Church gave rise to the fellowship. So St. Peter characterized the offence as lying against the Holy Spirit, or putting the Holy Spirit to a test. Ananias and Sapphira must have known with what abhorrence their sin would be regarded, and it is not surprising that when their double-dealing was exposed they should both die of fright. The difficulty of the story is not in the behaviour or fall of these two, but in the behaviour of

remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

St. Peter. We know from the account of him in the Gospels and from the story of his dissimulation at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11) that he was of an impetuous character. But after his repentance for his denial of our Lord we should hardly have expected such unchristian behaviour as this story represents. It could not of course be laid as a charge against St. Peter that after his stern rebuke of Ananias the offender fell down dead suddenly, though one would have expected St. Peter in future to be more careful in rebuking the sinful members of the congregation. But the story goes on to relate that Ananias was buried without a word being said to his wife, although she must have been in the neighbourhood. When she came into the house three hours later, St. Peter instead of telling her of the dreadful fall of her husband so as to give her a chance of repentance, cross-examined her in such a way that the sin in her heart was brought to light as a downright lie; and then he told her that her husband was dead and she would die too. One is reminded of nothing so much

- 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much.  
9 And she said, Yea, for so much. But Peter *said* unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy

as of the exultation with which the High Priest rent his clothes when he had succeeded in getting from our Lord's lips words which might be regarded as blasphemy. The story breathes the spirit of the Old Testament, of Elijah calling down fire upon the captains and their fifties, rather than the spirit of Christ. Try how we may, we cannot imagine Christ acting towards sinners as St. Peter is here represented as doing. If the event really happened as here related we should have to admit that St. Peter's repentance of denying Christ was not lasting, and that he had denied Him again equally seriously within a very short time. It is unfortunate that we have no certain information as to St. Luke's source for these early narratives. We know that he had not first-hand information as he had for so much of the later part of the Acts. The style of this passage bears clear signs of an Aramaic or Hebrew original. The simplest explanation of the difficulty is that the story as it came to St. Luke was the report as it was believed in Jerusalem some years after the event. The offence of Ananias and Sapphira is probably correctly described,

husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at 10 his feet, and gave up the ghost : and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, 11 and upon all that heard these things.

and it is probably true that they both died of fright or from some natural cause at the time, or about the time, when their offence was discovered. But we may devoutly hope that St. Peter was not so forgetful of our Lord's rebuke to St. James and St. John under similar circumstances, 'Ye know not what spirit ye are of', that he should have acted as the story relates. It is easier to believe that the fear which came over the infant Church led them to exaggerate the story each time they repeated it until it reached the form which was told to St. Luke.

11. The result of the death of Ananias and Sapphira is described both with regard to the Church and to all the outsiders who heard of it. St. Luke apparently felt that at this stage the Christian movement was sufficiently organized as a corporate body to deserve the name 'Church' by which it was known in his days, and this is the first time in the Acts that the word appears. Probably he was not certain when the name was actually used for the first time. In ii. 47 he wanted to say that the Lord added those who were on the road to salvation to *the Church*, but at the last word he seems to have hesitated, feeling that it was



- 12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest durst no man join

not correct so early to speak of the Church, and therefore instead of writing that word, he finished the sentence by adding the word 'together'. This form of the sentence is witnessed to by the best authorities, but being ungrammatical was altered in the Bezan Text to 'the Church'.

12-16. As if to balance the story of the disastrous end that befell Ananias and Sapphira, St. Luke here adds a general account of the healing work of the apostles. They, that is, the apostles and other Christians and the Jews who were attracted by the new teaching, met daily in Solomon's porch. But, none of the others, that is the Sadducean Jews who were set against Christianity, dared to join the movement. It would have been a natural thing for some of them to join either as spies, or for any possible advantages that they might get; and poor people might have been tempted to join for the sake of sharing in the daily ministrations. But the fate of Ananias and Sapphira prevented any others joining the movement from unworthy motives. One might have expected that the fear arising from that event would have decreased the number of new adherents; but, verse 14 tells us that, far from that being the case, there was a great multitude of both men and women, who, believing in the Lord, were added to the number. The cures of sick and deranged people

himself to them ; howbeit the people magnified them ; and believers were the more added to **14** the Lord, multitudes both of men and women ; insomuch that they even carried out the sick **15**

made so great an impression on the ordinary folk that they brought the sick out on beds into the street, and if they could not get near enough to speak to the apostles or touch them they even looked for benefit if St. Peter's shadow fell on them. They even brought the sick into Jerusalem from neighbouring towns. In healings such as these there must have been a great mixture : some had deep and living faith in our Lord and received the blessing of healing in answer to their prayers ; others approached St. Peter merely with the confidence with which one goes to a well-known doctor ; while others went with the superstitious idea that a power was proceeding from St. Peter and was present in his shadow. The first class we should nowadays call cases of faith-healing ; the last class we should recognize as healings by auto-suggestion.

It is only a few years ago since preachers used to try to explain why miracles of healing were possible in the early days of the Church and are not possible now. So unsatisfactory were their explanations that a certain school of critics asserted that the miracles had never occurred. In fact they expressed it as a general rule that ' Miracles do not happen '. Now we may thank God that the power to perform miraculous acts of healing has been restored to the Church ; and the only reason why such healings did not take place

into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some one of  
16 them. And there also came together the

a generation ago is that people did not expect them to happen. The power to perform such healings seems to be rapidly spreading, and it must be regarded as an example of the power of spirit over matter. The explanation offered by the sect called 'Christian Scientists', namely, that matter does not exist, and therefore pain is imaginary, is incorrect. Matter is a reality created by God, and into a human material body God is Incarnate, and in that body He felt real pain in order to relieve the pains of others and to save them from sin. The healings that have taken place in recent years in answer to prayer and faith are not yet sufficiently well-known for us to know the limitations of this method. Christians are not told not to call in the assistance of the doctor, and we may feel fairly sure that St. Paul availed himself of St. Luke whom he described as 'the beloved physician'. See the note on xxviii. 1-10. The modern study of psychology is adding a great deal to our knowledge of the relations of mind and body. For the present we should certainly make use of all the best knowledge that God has granted us, and that means calling in the most skilled doctor, at the same time as we pray to God for the recovery of the patient, remembering always to seek to know His will, and to bring our wishes into harmony with His designs who knows what is really best. The following quotation from

multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

J. A. Hadfield, who is himself a true Christian man, will act as a warning to those who belittle the services of physicians and surgeons as the instruments of God for healing: <sup>1</sup> 'The medical man does not deny that mental conditions can actively affect physiological functions. But the fact remains that in the present stage of our knowledge, the best remedy for tuberculosis is tuberculin, open-air treatment and special diet; and for cancer, early operation. We do not deny, theoretically, that mental conditions influence organic disease, even to the extent of cure. We do deny that this is in the present state of our knowledge the best form of treatment. To treat such a patient solely by suggestion, unction or prayer, is to deny him the best chance of recovery.' One further point may be mentioned which appears from recent psychological studies. Healings of the body which occur through prayer or faith or auto-suggestion are often so sudden as to cause us the greatest astonishment, because the majority of healings by the use of drugs are slow, and for that reason we describe these sudden cures as miraculous. But the psychologists are finding out the method by which such instantaneous cures take place and it is being seen that they follow laws just as much as slow cures. In other words the wonder or miracle

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology and Morals*, p. 46.

17 But the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Saddu-

is due to our ignorance of the laws of this kind of healing. It is probably true that the same could be said of all miracles. Even the resurrection of Christ, which strikes us as so wonderful and miraculous because other men have not risen from the grave, will one day be seen to be in obedience to a spiritual law ; and we believe that we also shall rise again to life in obedience to that same law.

17-40. It seems that when Peter and John were released from their first imprisonment the sanhedrin took no immediate steps to enforce the order that they were not to preach in the name of Jesus. But when the acts of healing increased the popularity of the apostles, the sanhedrin once more got alarmed, and determined if possible to stop the movement. So the apostles were again arrested and put in prison till they were to be brought for trial next morning. By divine intervention they were released from prison during the night. No details are given here, as they are later in the case of St. Peter's escape, by which we can determine the method of escape. Next morning the high priest and sanhedrin were gathered together and with them the elders of the children of Israel. The word 'gerousia' translated 'senate' in the Revised Version, does not correspond to any Jewish body of which we have knowledge, and may simply mean an unofficial gathering of elders. At any rate we notice that Pharisees were present as well as the Sadducees who formed the high-priestly party, for

cees), and they were filled with jealousy, and **18** laid hands on the apostles, and put them in

Gamaliel was a Pharisee. When they sent to fetch the apostles they were found not in prison but in the temple, preaching 'the words of this Life.' That is a striking description of the Christian message: it was not merely a philosophy which they were explaining; rather they were setting forth and explaining the new life which was seen in the Christian community and was showing itself outwardly in the restoration of so many sick people to health. As was natural, this escape of the apostles was a fresh cause of anxiety to the authorities. If on the one hand they had been released by prison officials it showed that the hated movement had followers even among those officials; but, if on the other hand, it was a miraculous escape it would only enhance the popularity and good name of the Christians. Instead therefore of sending to arrest them in the usual way, the captain of the temple went himself and induced the apostles to come without recourse to violence. In the question that the high priest put to the apostles it is clear that his fear was lest popular feeling should turn against him and his party for having brought about the death of Jesus. The actual charge brought against the apostles must have been disobedience to the command of the sanhedrin. St. Peter's speech in reply to the charge is exceedingly bold. He sets in contrast first, obedience to God or to men; then, the fact that the priests had wantonly put Jesus to death, but God had raised Him from the dead. God had exalted Him to be Leader

19 public ward. But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought

and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness to sinful Israel. Lastly the apostles claimed that the Holy Spirit was with them, because they obeyed God, and He was bearing witness with them to the things that had occurred. The priests recognized at once that this was an attack on them, and an accusation that they, the religious leaders of Israel, were opposed to God and void of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter's words cut them to the heart as if by a saw (such is the meaning of the Greek word) and their first intention was to slay them, risking the anger of the Roman Procurator, in whose hands alone rested the authority to condemn anyone to death. From this purpose they were stayed by Rabban Gamaliel, a great Pharisaic jurist, one of the seven in Jewish history who were honoured with the title Rabban. Gamaliel may have been actuated entirely by worthy motives, he may have seen the injustice of condemning men for works of healing, he may have felt some sympathy with the apostles for teaching about the resurrection, or he may have been actuated entirely by hostility to the Sadducees. His argument was that in former insurrections, after the death of the leader the followers had been dispersed; and that if this movement was contrary to God's will the same would happen in this case since Jesus had been killed. He therefore advised the sanhedrin to let the men alone leaving the fate of the movement in the hands of God. To this they agreed, but for greater security beat the



them out, and said, Go ye, and stand and speak **20**  
in the temple to the people all the words of  
this Life. And when they heard *this*, they **21**  
entered into the temple about daybreak, and

apostles before dismissing them. (One is reminded of the saying attributed to Muhammad 'Trust God, but tie the camel's leg.') Gamaliel's speech raises a historical difficulty. For Josephus records a rising under a certain Theudas not earlier than A.D. 44 which Gamaliel of course could not have referred to as it would be at least ten years in the future when he spoke, whereas from Gamaliel's speech it is evident that the Theudas he referred to made his insurrection before the census of A.D. 7. Josephus mentions the rising of Judas as well as that of Theudas, and some writers have thought that St. Luke must have read Josephus's account and only half-remembered it. This is most unlikely, for we have seen reason to date Acts about A.D. 60-62 whereas Josephus's *Antiquities* was not written till A.D. 94. The difficulty really arises because both Josephus and St. Luke are good historians. But one of the two must have made a mistake, and if we are right in our dates, Josephus as being furthest from the events is the more likely to be in error. Various suggestions have been made; e.g. that there were two risings under leaders named Theudas, or that the name Theudas in Josephus is a Christian interpolation, but such suggestions cannot be more than conjecture.

**20. The words of this life.** Already in iii. 15, St. Peter had spoken of Christ as the Prince of Life,

taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison-house to have  
22 them brought. But the officers that came found them not in the prison; and they returned,  
23 and told, saying, The prison-house we found shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors: but when we had opened,  
24 we found no man within. Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed concerning them whereunto this would grow.  
25 And there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in the prison are in the

and again in xi. 18 the gift of the Spirit is spoken of as 'repentance unto life'. It is evident that the early disciples felt that Christ had brought to humanity a kind of life that they had not experienced before. This was the true life, which St. John's Gospel so frequently speaks of as 'eternal life' meaning thereby not merely life of endless duration but life of a particular quality fitting men for communion with God.<sup>1</sup> Christ had spoken of Himself as the life, and

<sup>1</sup> This meaning of the expression 'eternal life' in St. John's Gospel is to be gathered from the context. The Greek word translated 'eternal' implies only endless duration. See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of New Testament Greek*, αἰώνιος, and Burton, *Galatians*, pp. 431, 432.

temple standing and teaching the people. Then **26** went the captain with the officers, and brought them, *but* without violence ; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And when **27** they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, We straitly charged you not to teach **28** in this name : and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Peter and the **29** apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers **30** raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right **31** hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give

those who are 'in Christ' become partakers of the life. From the very first beginnings of creation when, untold millions of years ago, the first living creatures, animals and plants appeared upon the earth, there had been life. Life had been handed down from parent to child through the ages of evolution as a precious heritage till in the modern age the world teems with life of the most diverse kinds from the microbes of disease to trees and flowering plants, four-footed animals and man. And yet with all this life around them the disciples felt that Christ had brought them life. And they were right. For the life of the lower creation, as far as we know, passes at death into nothingness ; and is only continued in

repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.

32 And we are witnesses of these things ; and so  
as the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to  
them that obey him.

33 But they, when they heard this, were cut to  
34 the heart, and were minded to slay them. But  
there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee,  
named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in  
honour of all the people, and commanded to  
35 put the men forth a little while. And he said  
unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to your-  
selves as touching these men, what ye are about

their descendants. True life is measured by moral and ethical values, and therefore is not to be found in the lower creation. We read that man was made a living soul, but that is perhaps better to be understood as a capability of eternal life than as a gift of immortality to all men. The Old Testament in its later parts was feeling after the doctrine of resurrection to life for the righteous. Greek Philosophy brought the idea of the immortality of the soul as such, but that idea never found firm root in Judaism or the Christianity of the New Testament. The Jewish apocalyptic idea of a final judgment day required a resurrection of the wicked as well as of the righteous that they might be judged, and such imagery was occasionally taken over into Christian thought. But it would probably be true to say that such an idea is not characteristic of the teaching

to do. For before these days rose up Theudas, **36** giving himself out to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Gali- **37** lee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away *some of the* people after him : he also perished ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. And now I say unto you, Refrain **38** from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown : but if it is of God, ye will not be able **39** to overthrow them ; lest haply ye be found even

either of Christ or the apostles. The righteous man having chosen good and rejected evil, has developed the latent capacity of life which the death of the body cannot hinder ; but the wicked man, by failing to develop that capacity, has nothing in him of that eternal character which can outlast bodily death. All the pictures of outer darkness where is the weeping and gnashing of teeth pale in significance before the plain and awful words ' he that seeks to save his life shall lose it.' That is really the scriptural teaching of the fate of the wicked—the loss of life which they might have attained. We shrink from the thought, and many Christians have believed that in the mercy of God all men will eventually be saved. This thought, though supposedly magnifying the mercy of

40 to be fighting against God. And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them  
41 go. They therefore departed from the presence

God, really tends to hide the moral distinction between right and wrong. There is a choice of wrong which leads to loss of life, and there is a choice of right which leads to life ; and this great moral distinction, so clear to the early Christians, accounts for the wonderful transformation of character that was seen in the first Christian communities and is still seen wherever Christianity is a living force.<sup>1</sup>

41. The description of the apostles returning after their severe beating, and rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name of Jesus, following literally the command of Matt. v. 12, Luke vi. 23, throws a light on the spirit pervading the early Christian community. We had been told before of their continual joy, but this incident shows their attitude much more clearly. For there are many ways of reacting to pain and insult. The commonest way, the way of the world, is by curses at the time and malice and revenge afterwards. Then there is the Stoical way, the way of the typical soldier, who feels that he is on his honour to bear his pain with fortitude. Then there is the way of self-sacrifice of those who feel that their

<sup>1</sup> The whole subject is dealt with by J. Y. Simpson, *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, Chapter xiii.

of the council, rejoicing that they were counted

sufferings are serving a useful purpose to others. The apostles' feeling was a blending of these last two: they felt that loyalty to their Lord demanded fortitude in sharing in such sufferings as He had experienced, and they were also impressed by the great Old Testament passages like Ps. xxii and Isa. liii which sing the praises of suffering on behalf of others. There is something naive and childlike in the apostles' rejoicing, something of self-consciousness; and this was befitting the earliest stage of an infant Church. The same attitude later on, when the Church was fully established, and Christians sought martyrdom—even insulting their captors so as to attain the martyr's crown—became out of place and had to be rebuked by the authorities. At a still later time ascetics tortured themselves, thinking thereby to add to their spirituality, but really promoting their own self-esteem. The bursting joy of the early Christians that could not dimmed by beatings was forgotten, and the ascetic found a morbid satisfaction in his self-inflicted pains. The fact is that the true development of the naive joy of the early apostles is seen in St. Paul who suffered in body greatly for the furtherance of his work, but was not elated with self-importance at the sufferings he had borne. For him such sufferings were taken as sharing in Christ's suffering, and his mind, like Christ's, was not upon his suffering self, but upon the multitudes who were thereby hearing the Gospel. He showed the serenity of mind which is the true spirit of the Beatitudes.



worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name.

Of the same spirit have been the missionaries of later days, people like David Livingstone, Mary Slessor, Henry Martyn, who did not count their sufferings for the love that they had towards the people whom they served. Sadhu Sundar Singh, when in acute pain, was heard to murmur, 'How sweet it is to suffer for His sake.' But he quite definitely repudiates the ascetic idea as ordinarily understood. Suffering not for its own sake, but for the sake of Christ and His work is what he loves.<sup>1</sup> Similarly Narayan Vaman Tilak, when within a few weeks of his death, wrote, 'Neither doctor nor I can tell you whether I am improving. But one thing is certain and that is, blessed, doubly blessed, is all this pain; [it is experiencing the cross in my body. Blessed, thrice blessed, is this sickness; it is perfect union with Christ. With Christ, and in Him, all my pain disappears; it comes again when I miss Him. The doctor and all here wonder at it. I am, with all my sickness, as it were, the pastor of the hospital! Praise God with me.'<sup>2</sup> This principle of the highest attitude towards suffering was perhaps never more clearly expressed than in a conversation reported of Rabia the woman mystic of Islam. 'On one occasion when Malik Dinar, Hasan Basri and Shaiq were with Rabia, the conversation turned on sincerity of heart towards God. Hasan Basri said, 'He has not sincere

<sup>1</sup> Streeter and Appasamy. *The Sadhu*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Winslow, *Narayan Vaman Tilak, the Christian Poet of Maharashtra* p. 129.

And every day, in the temple and at home, 42 they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.

love to God who does not bear with constancy the afflictions which the Lord sends him.' 'That remark savours of self-conceit' said Rabia. Shaiq observed, 'He is not sincere who does not render thanks for afflictions.' 'There is a higher degree of sincerity than that' said Rabia. Malik Dinar suggested, 'He is not sincere who does not find delight in the afflictions which the Lord sends.' 'That is not the purest sincerity,' she remarked. Then they asked her to define sincerity. She said, 'He is not sincere who does not forget the pain of affliction through his absorption in God.'<sup>1</sup>

42. The threats and beating by the Jewish authorities in no wise hindered the Christian propaganda. The disciples continued as before to visit the temple, probably for the sacrifices as well as for disputings in Solomon's Porch, and also continued to meet at home. It must have been only at home that they celebrated the Breaking of Bread. The subject of their teaching and the good news which they proclaimed was the Messiah Jesus. It would be interesting to know how long Christians continued to take part in sacrifices, but no information is vouchsafed us on this point. From the time of the Crucifixion they probably thought of our Lord's death as a sacrifice; they certainly applied to Him at once the prophecies

<sup>1</sup> Claude Field : *Mystics and Saints of Islam*, p. 34.

**61** Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected

about the suffering Servant of the Lord ; but it would take a little time for them to draw the conclusion that the sacrifice of Christ was all-sufficient and rendered animal sacrifices obsolete. Further the natural desire to maintain fellowship with the non-Christian Jews as long as possible made them still worship in the temple ; and temple worship centred in sacrifice. It is of course clear that public Christian worship, apart from the Eucharist, was based on the precedent, not of the temple, but of the synagogue.

THE FIRST EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH  
OUTSIDE JUDÆA, vi-viii

1-7. In those days, while the disciples were increasing in numbers, a movement began which resulted in the extension of the Church beyond the bounds of Israel. St. Luke, writing at a time when the Gospel of ' Christ among the Gentiles ' was being freely preached and accepted, was intensely interested in the beginning of the movement to free Christianity from the bonds of Judaism. So naturally and quietly had the movement commenced that it was hard for the historian to fix on any definite date when it had begun. Particularly was this the case, because, looking back on the history, it was clear that our Lord had made preparations, and even given explicit commands,

in the daily ministration. And the twelve<sup>2</sup> called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look ye out<sup>3</sup>

for the world-wide extension of the Gospel. St. Luke fixes our attention on that point in the history when the Jews of the Dispersion began to come into prominence within the ranks of the disciples. These Jews of the wider world, whose habitual language was Greek, are spoken of as Hellenists to distinguish them from the Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestine who are described as Hebrews. The rise to prominence of the Hellenists is described in this chapter. The exact date of the event described does not seem to have been known to St. Luke ; but what he did know was that it followed on the increase of numbers of the Christian community. It has been suggested by many commentators that St. Luke was indebted to a written source for this information ; but it may be noted that Philip, or his daughters, could easily have supplied the information about the appointment of the seven, and that St. Paul would be able to tell the story of Stephen. There are some who regard the twelve apostles as a very conservative element in the early Church, only forced by circumstances against their will to admit of the inclusion of the Gentiles. It is even suggested that with the advent of Stephen to prominence Christianity was seen in two different forms, a Jewish form, represented by the twelve, which was not unpopular with the Jewish authorities, and a universalistic form represented by

therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this 4 business. But we will continue stedfastly in

Stephen and later by St. Paul, which was persecuted by the Jews. Indeed it is suggested that the reason why the twelve did not leave Jerusalem during the persecution after the death of Stephen (viii. 1) was that their party was not persecuted. Such a view of the twelve, is based upon an exaggeration of St. Peter's conflict with St. Paul at Antioch and a confusion of the Judaising emissaries of St. James with St. James himself (Gal. ii. 11, 12). The real truth is that the twelve were men of enthusiasm, about as far removed from conservatism as possible. (Who can seriously think of St. Peter as a reactionary?) But as the twelve were the leaders of the Church they had to hold the whole Church together. A rash action on their part in setting out themselves to the Gentile world at once would have left the Church without a central authority, and there can be little doubt that the Jewish section would not have maintained communion with the Gentile section. It was the duty of the apostles, as it is the duty of bishops of the present day, to hold together in one unity the divergent elements of the Church, encouraging them to develop each on their own lines, in harmony with the whole body. And in the performance of this duty they succeeded admirably, as the events soon to be described show. It was the twelve who immediately took up the question when the Hellenists complained

prayer, and in the ministry of the word. And <sup>5</sup> the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and

that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food to the poor Christians. The twelve at once saw that within the Christian Church there ought to be no room for such unfairness or accusations of unfairness. What was necessary was that the Church as a body should make business-like arrangements for the proper organization of its charity. The exact details of how the charity was administered are not given. We may conjecture that there was a daily love-feast, at which rich and poor ate together, and at each place one of the seven was to be in charge. The chief difficulty of such a conjecture is that the number of Christians was now over 5,000, and seven men would not be sufficient to preside over all their love-feasts. Or we may conjecture that the distribution was made personally to the poor widows and that the seven were a committee entrusted with the common funds and their expenditure. On the former view the 'serving of tables' would refer to dinner tables, on the latter view to money-counters, either of which is linguistically possible. Anyhow, seven men were put forward by the whole body of Christians. Every one of them bore a Greek name, which would suggest that they were all Hellenists, though we cannot be absolutely certain because many Judæan Jews would have

- 6 Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch : whom they set before the apostles : and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.
- 7 And the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly ; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Greek names in addition to their Hebrew names. It is however probable that the majority were Hellenists, if not all, and one at least was actually a proselyte. The selection of such men, and their ready acceptance by the twelve, shows the breadth of outlook of the Christians and of the twelve. For their work they were specially set apart by the laying on of the apostles' hands with prayer. This act became the type of all future ordinations of ministers in the Church. The seven have frequently been regarded as deacons, corresponding to the third order of the ministry as it developed towards the end of the Apostolic period and has been followed ever since in the Great Church. The identification of the seven with deacons rests on the fact that their main work was to be the administration of the material resources of the Church, which is one of the duties of deacons. But apart from that point, there is no reason for identifying them, and indeed it would be strange if the third and least important order of the ministry were appointed while there were still no bishops or presbyters. We should therefore regard their appointment as a temporary measure, in which they



And Stephen, full of grace and power,<sup>8</sup> wrought great wonders and signs among the people. But there arose certain of them that<sup>9</sup> were of the synagogue called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and

occupied the second place after the apostles. Only of two of them do we hear anything further : Stephen during his short ministry was not merely engaged in secular affairs of the Church, but also became an active preacher and apologist for the faith, and was the first of that famous order, the noble army of martyrs. Philip was one of the first missionaries who carried the good news outside the boundaries of Judæa. Before proceeding to tell the story of how the activities and martyrdom of Stephen set in motion the centrifugal movement of Christianity St. Luke pauses, and in one verse (vi. 7) tells us of the continued expansion of the movement in the city of Jerusalem and the adherence to the Church of a great number of the Jewish priests.

8-15. The ordination of Stephen was accompanied by an extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit. Whether he had been an outstanding Christian before this or not, we are not told ; but from this time onwards he was filled with the divine favour and was given the power to work mighty miracles and signs. It is to be noticed that the words of this man are not attributed to his own personal powers, but to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The advances and victories of

**10** Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit  
**11** by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

the Church, whether as recorded in the Acts or in the modern mission field, cannot be explained as the ordinary works of men. It is impossible to read any such records and to deny the miraculous. There is no explanation of the extension of the Church in the face of opposition on every side, of the moral change in the lives of men, save the power of the Holy Spirit of God working in and through the messengers and inspiring the hearts of the converts.

The scene of St. Stephen's labours is given in verse 9. He disputed in the synagogue that went by the name of the Libertines, Cyrenians and Alexandrians; and also with Jews from Cilicia and Asia. Libertines were Jews who had been slaves in Rome but had been set free. There were many synagogues in Jerusalem, and it would not perhaps be very surprising if Jews from Rome had combined with Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria in building a synagogue. The conjectural emendation of Libertine into Libyan or Libystine, is however attractive, as Libya is close to Cyrene and Alexandria. The construction of the Greek shows that the Jews from Cilicia and Asia who also joined in the discussions with Stephen formed a separate group; but it does not appear whether they represented another synagogue, or were visitors in the synagogue already mentioned. There can be

And they stirred up the people, and the elders, **12** and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, and set **13** up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy

little doubt that the mention of the Cilicians goes back to St. Paul, who must have been one of those who had disputed with Stephen. We may be fairly certain that it was St. Paul's reminiscence that they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen spoke. The wisdom was the argument for Christianity from the Hebrew Scriptures. The spirit was the inspiration which gave force to his words. Herein lies an example and warning to missionaries and all preachers; argument and persuasive wisdom have a rightful place; but behind them must be an inspiration showing itself in the life, visible in the eyes and demeanour, and carrying conviction to the hearers. St. Stephen's hearers were baffled. They had no answer to the arguments, no power to withstand the manifest inspiration. But with hearts hardened against accepting the unwelcome truth, they had recourse to rage, and determined to silence the mouth that convicted them, forgetting that they could not silence the voice of the Holy Spirit. Among them was Saul, whose determination was stronger than that of the others. He was not satisfied with the silencing of St. Stephen, but must go on attacking the Christians till the hated truth was utterly quenched. The vigour with which the attack was made is a measure of the conviction that they were fighting against the

14 place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which

truth. Modern missionaries may take comfort in the same thought.

The charge that was brought against St. Stephen was of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God. The order is significant, Moses before God. It was the human system of law and sacrifice, the customs which they believed dated from their lawgiver Moses, which most of all they clung to; and only in the second place they felt that the idea of God as enshrined in that system was being called in question. The antagonism of Islam is the same. It arises from fear that Muhammed is to be set aside, and with him the whole system of laws and customs associated with his name. Blaspheming against Allah is really secondary, for in very fact the theological ideas of the Sufis which are frankly pantheistic are more opposed than Christianity to the orthodox theology of Islam. Again the antagonism of Hinduism is the same. It arises from fear of the abolition of caste and all the kindred customs. For Christian theology, apart from the abolition of such human traditions, might easily find a place in the Hindu pantheon beside the very varied and opposing theologies that are at present accepted within Hinduism.

The Hellenist Jews, therefore, enraged at their inability to answer the arguments and force of St. Stephen, began to stir up the people by saying that he had attacked the temple and the traditions. The

Moses delivered unto us. And all that sat in 15 the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

thoughts of the crowd would immediately go back to that arch-persecutor of the Jews, Nicanor, who in the year 161 B.C. had threatened the temple, saying 'I will lay this temple of God even with the ground, and will break down the altar, and I will erect here a temple to Bacchus for all to see' (2 Macc. xiv. 33). The Jews of those days were so stirred by this wanton braggart threat that they poured in numbers to join the army and defeat Nicanor, and it is said of them that 'their fear for wives and children, and furthermore for brethren and kinsfolk, was in less account with them; but greatest and first was their fear for the consecrated sanctuary' (2 Macc. xv. 18). The events of those days were ever kept fresh in the minds of the Jews by the annual observance of Nicanor's Day, when the persecutor came to destruction. By bringing a similar charge against St. Stephen, the Hellenist Jews had no difficulty in arousing the passions of the people. To give their attack on St. Stephen the semblance of legality they dragged him before the sanhedrin. As he stood there, ready to make his defence, there was a look on his face which impressed those that were his judges; not the mild, gentle, look that is often seen in paintings of angels; nor the fierce look of an avenging angel, but a look that told of inspiration within, clear eyes burning with the inner light. We can hardly doubt that it was Saul who remembered that look, a look which burnt

71 And the high priest said, Are these things  
2 so? And he said,

Brethren and fathers, hearken. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt  
3 in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into  
4 the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, *God* removed him into this land,  
5 wherein ye now dwell: and he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: and he promised that he would give it to him in possession, and to his seed after

into his soul until he too was turned to accept Jesus as his master and learnt in his own life to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. The High Priest, without waiting to sift the evidence of the false witnesses, demanded of St. Stephen whether the charges were true.

1-53. Stephen's Speech. In answer to the charges that had been brought against him Stephen made a long speech, relating in summary a large part of the Old Testament history. It may be noticed in passing that although a considerable portion of the speech consists of actual quotations from the Old Testament, yet the language is sometimes altered, and a number of small deviations from the Old Testament narrative are to be

him, when *as yet* he had no child. And God 6  
spake on this wise, that his seed should  
sojourn in a strange land, and that they  
should bring them into bondage, and entreat  
them evil, four hundred years. And the 7  
nation to which they shall be in bondage will  
I judge, said God: and after that shall they  
come forth, and serve me in this place. And 8  
he gave him the covenant of circumcision:  
and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised  
him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob,  
and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. And the 9  
patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph,  
sold him into Egypt: and God was with him,

seen. These deviations are mostly such as were common in the Apostolic Age, much as if a modern writer, telling the story of Eden, were to speak of the forbidden fruit as an apple, following the tradition of Christian art. Thus many of St. Stephen's deviations from the Old Testament may be paralleled in Philo or other writers of the day. They scarcely affect the main point of the address.

To understand how a repetition of Old Testament history could be a defence against the charges brought against Stephen we must notice the charges carefully. He was charged with blaspheming Moses and God, and this is defined more closely by the statement that he ceased not to speak words against this holy place (i.e. Jerusalem, and in particular the temple) and the



10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor  
11 over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no  
12 sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers  
13 the first time. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's  
14 race became manifest unto Pharaoh. And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father, and all his kindred, threescore and  
15 fifteen souls. And Jacob went down into Egypt; and he died, himself, and our fathers;

Law. It is clear that the blasphemy against God was not any attack on the unity or moral character of God, which is what we nowadays should consider as blasphemy. It was rather that St. Stephen's words against the temple were regarded as an attack on the dwelling place of God and therefore against God Himself. We shall see that the speech makes clear St. Stephen's attitude to Jerusalem and the temple on the one hand, and to the Law on the other hand; and therefore constitutes a complete reply to the charges. We are not of course to suppose that this is a verbatim report of the speech; and, as St. Paul is almost certainly the ultimate source for St. Luke's information, it would not be surprising if it also

and they were carried over unto Shechem, 16 and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver of the sons of Hamor in Shechem. But as the time of the promise 17 drew nigh, which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till there arose another king over 18 Egypt, which knew not Joseph. The same 19 dealt subtilly with our race, and evil entreated our fathers, that they should cast out their babes to the end they might not live. At 20 which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house: and when he was 21 cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and

reflected the sort of teaching and argument that St. Stephen had already been using in the synagogue.

It will readily be understood that in the days of Christ and the apostles the narrower nationalist ideas of the Jews were accepted as the true interpretation of the Old Testament revelation, the ideas, namely, that Jerusalem was the only place for the worship of God and that the Law was the core of Old Testament religion. It is true that both these conceptions find strong expression in such books as Leviticus and Chronicles. But there is another side of Old Testament revelation, which was very much neglected in those days, and to which St. Stephen drew attention. In fact St. Stephen emphasized the universalistic

22 nourished him for her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words  
23 and works. But when he was well-nigh forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his  
24 brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, smiting  
25 the Egyptian: and he supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance; but they  
26 understood not. And the day following he appeared unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to

passages of the Old Testament as being the true revelation of God, and attempted to prove that the narrower view of the Pharisees and Sadducees was not a true following of Moses. These views were greatly developed by St. Paul who regarded the Law as a side issue, not in the main line of development of the Old Testament. It is worth noticing that modern scholars have been coming round to the same viewpoint, which means laying far greater stress on the prophetic elements of the Old Testament as the main revelation of God, and giving a place of much less importance to the Law.

St. Stephen then began by recalling that God's first appearance to Abraham was in a foreign land,

another? But he that did his neighbour **27**  
wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made  
thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wouldest **28**  
thou kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian  
yesterday? And Moses fled at this saying, **29**  
and became a sojourner in the land of Midian,  
where he begat two sons. And when forty **30**  
years were fulfilled, an angel appeared to him  
in the wilderness of mount Sinai, in a flame  
of fire in a bush. And when Moses saw it, **31**  
he wondered at the sight: and as he drew  
near to behold, there came a voice of the  
Lord, I am the God of thy fathers, the God **32**  
of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. And

and that, although God promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance to Abraham's seed, Abraham himself never possessed any of it—save a burying ground. He then related how the children of Israel sojourned in Egypt. The patriarchs who died in Egypt were buried it is true in Canaan, but not in the land of Judah. Moses the great prophet and leader was not nourished in the Holy Land, but in Egypt and Midian. The holy ground where God appeared to him in the bush was outside Palestine, as was also Sinai where he received the Law by the hand of angels. In all this story where was any preference shown by God for Jerusalem? Then St. Stephen proceeded to narrow the question down from Jerusalem to the temple. Moses, he says, had built the tabernacle in the wilderness

**33** Moses trembled, and durst not behold. And the Lord said unto him, Loose the shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest **34** is holy ground. I have surely seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I am come down to deliver them: and now come, I will send thee **35** into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? him hath God sent *to be* both a ruler and a deliverer with the hand of the angel which **36** appeared to him in the bush. This man led them forth, having wrought wonders and signs in Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the

in accordance with the eternal heavenly pattern of which he was vouchsafed a vision. David out of piety to God wished to build a house for God, a wish actually carried into effect by Solomon. But obviously, in so far as Solomon's temple differed from the tabernacle, it differed from the heavenly pattern. Indeed, not only was that particular temple of a man-made pattern, but God by his prophet (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2) had clearly declared that no earthly temple was worthy of Him. If St. Stephen had said that the temple was only temporary, he had plenty of support in the Old Testament.

Interwoven with this argument regarding the holy city and its temple was an argument regarding the Law. Here his argument seems to be twofold. First

wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, <sup>37</sup> which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me. This is <sup>38</sup> he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received living oracles to give unto us: to <sup>39</sup> whom our fathers would not be obedient, but thrust him from them, and turned back in their hearts unto Egypt, saying unto Aaron, <sup>40</sup> Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, which led us forth out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, <sup>41</sup> and brought a sacrifice unto the idol, and

the Jewish authorities were mistaken as to what constituted the Law; and secondly they themselves broke the Law and were therefore unfit to defend the Law against an alleged blasphemer of it. The Jewish authorities regarded the whole legal and ritualistic system as part of the Law revealed to Moses. St Stephen pointed out that the covenant with Abraham was of equal validity with the covenant of Sinai; and he quoted Amos v. 25-27 to prove that the sacrificial system, which formed the very backbone of the Jewish ritual, was not of Mosaic origin, but originated as disloyalty to God. This of course, as modern historical research has shown,

42 rejoiced in the works of their hands. But God turned, and gave them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets,

Did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices

Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

43 And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of the god Rephan, The figures which ye made to worship them:

And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as he appointed

was not literally true. There can be no doubt that the Israelites in their nomadic days under Moses did offer sacrifices. But modern research has also shown that the great development of the legal and ritualistic system took place after the Babylonian exile, and did not originate with Moses. In this St. Stephen by intuition had rightly anticipated the results of modern historical research. St. Stephen finally turns on the Jewish authorities, and accuses them of breaking the Mosaic Law. The most important thing that Moses ever did was to foretell the coming of a prophet like himself. Just as the Jewish authorities in times past



who spake unto Moses, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen. Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought 45 in with Joshua when they entered on the possession of the nations, which God thrust out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favour in the sight 46 of God, and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a 47 house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not 48 in *houses* made with hands; as saith the prophet,

The heaven is my throne, 49

And the earth the footstool of my feet;

What manner of house will ye build me?  
saith the Lord:

Or what is the place of my rest?

Did not my hand make all these things? 50

had always slain the prophets, breaking the Sixth Commandment of the great Mosaic decalogue, so the Jews who now sat to judge St. Stephen had broken the same Sixth Commandment by murdering Jesus, and also had broken the special injunction of Moses that they should be obedient to the coming Prophet.

It is worth noticing that Jesus Christ is only mentioned incidentally in the speech. St. Stephen had not been arraigned, as the apostles had been, on a charge of preaching about Jesus. His speech

- 51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart  
and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost :  
52 as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the  
prophets did not your fathers persecute ? and  
they killed them which shewed before of the  
coming of the Righteous One ; of whom ye  
53 have now become betrayers and murderers ; ye  
who received the law as it was ordained by  
angels, and kept it not.  
54 Now when they heard these things, they  
were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on

answers the charges actually brought against him, and proves that the revelation of God was a much wider thing than his accusers imagined and did not tie down divine worship to one particular place (Jerusalem), nor one particular method (sacrifice). It is therefore historically incorrect when Rackham in his commentary on Acts tries to show that the Old Testament heroes are mentioned by St. Stephen as being types of our Lord. However suitable such an argument might be on other occasions, it would have been quite out of place here. It is however possible that the use of the word 'deliverer' of Moses in verse 35 may have been suggested to St. Stephen (or St. Luke) instead of the word 'judge' which occurs in the quotation from Exodus ii. 14, because Jesus was the prophet like unto Moses. The corresponding word 'deliverance' is used by St. Luke of the work of Jesus in his Gospel, Luke i. 68, ii. 38.

vii. 54-viii. 1. The effect of St. Stephen's speech

him with their teeth. But he, being full of 55  
the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into  
heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus  
standing on the right hand of God, and said, 56  
Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the  
Son of man standing on the right hand of  
God. But they cried out with a loud voice, 57  
and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him

on his hearers was the same as the effect of the  
apostles' speech in v. 33: they were cut to the heart.  
His arguments were so convincing that they were  
unable to meet them with counter-arguments. They  
were reduced to unreasoning rage; while he was  
filled with ecstasy and saw in a vision the divine  
glory and the Son of Man standing on the right hand  
of God. Elsewhere Jesus is represented as seated  
at the right hand of God. But St. Stephen saw Him  
standing like the Son of Man of Daniel vii. 13 who  
was 'coming'. The Son of Man was coming to  
assist His servant. This is the only mention of the  
title 'Son of Man' outside the gospels. It will be  
remembered that our Lord used the title of Himself  
in reference to His future sufferings and triumph. It  
is with the idea of Jesus coming again in triumph  
that St. Stephen used the expression here. There  
was nothing blasphemous in referring to the coming  
of the Son of Man, even if it was implied that the  
Son of Man was Jesus, for the expression was taken  
straight from the Old Testament, and the Old Testa-  
ment does not declare the divinity of the Son of Man.

58 with one accord ; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him : and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young  
59 man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *the Lord*, and saying, Lord Jesus,  
60 receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this,

But just as the High Priest had declared it blasphemy when Jesus admitted that He was Messiah, so the Jews treated St. Stephen's remark as blasphemy, and without any formal condemnation dragged him outside the city and stoned him. The only semblance of justice was in fulfilling the requirement that the witnesses should cast the first stones. But they were false witnesses, and the High Priest had taken no steps to test the truth of their testimony. As the penitent robber on the Cross had prayed Jesus to remember him when He came in His kingdom, so St. Stephen prayed to Jesus to receive his departing soul ; and then, following the highest example, he prayed that the sin of his murderers might not be laid to their account. Thus, not with the pangs and terrors of an evil death, but with the peace of one entering on the repose of sleep knowing that the morning light would rouse him to a brighter life, his soul departed into the hands of the Master. The last words of the narrative again tell us to whom we owe its graphic description : ' Saul was consenting to his death.' Saul was not one of those who bore witness

he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria,

against Stephen, but by holding the garments of the witnesses he showed himself their aider and abettor.

1-3. The murder of Stephen was followed by a general persecution of Christians. The populace, who till then held the Christians in favour, had been turned against them by the allegations that Stephen was blaspheming the Law and threatening the temple. The authorities who had allowed the illegal proceedings against Stephen were not likely to interfere to protect Christians against persecution and outrage. So we must imagine an outburst of mob violence, the Jews attacking Christians wherever they found them. Whether any others were killed we are not told, but it is clear that the attacks were of personal violence. Saul went a stage further when he instituted legal proceedings and had many Christians cast into prison. The pious men who buried St. Stephen may have been partly Christian and partly non-Christian Jews. There is no need to suppose that the flight of the Christians was so precipitate that sufficient men were not left in the city that same evening to perform the last offices for the murdered saint. The fact that the persecution was irregular mob violence explains how it was that the apostles

- 2 except the apostles. And devout men buried  
Stephen, and made great lamentation over  
3 him. But Saul laid waste the church, enter-  
ing into every house, and haling men and  
women committed them to prison.  
4 They therefore that were scattered abroad

were able to remain in the city. The mob would be more ready to attack the poor and helpless Christians than those in high position. These leaders would have suffered the brunt of the attack if it had been an organized attempt of the Jewish authorities to suppress the movement. But it was evident that the protecting hand of God was over the apostles, and the authorities would naturally be shy to arrest the apostles again. With Saul's entry on the scene and his method of bringing Christians before the sanhedrin for trial, the persecution entered on a new stage. It is probable that the mob violence gradually subsided, so that when Saul was converted the persecution was virtually at an end. This is what we are to understand by the peace that the Church enjoyed (ix. 31) after Saul's conversion. In xi. 1 we find a Christian community again in Jerusalem.

4. The first spread of Christianity outside Judæa was a result of the persecution. Contrast with this the spread of Islam by the march of victorious armies, and the spread of Buddhism in India owing to the royal edicts of Asoka. In this difference is seen one of the marks of Christianity—progress through suffering, and life through death. Other

went about preaching the word. And Philip<sup>5</sup>  
went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed  
ed unto them the Christ. And the multitudes<sup>6</sup>

religions had inculcated indifference to suffering, but Christianity alone showed the powerful influence of bearing suffering for the sake of others. The Christian refugees from Jerusalem, still wearing bandages on broken heads and limbs, and yet bold in preaching their gospel of good-will, were a marvellous witness to the spiritual life inspiring them.

5-13. Two illustrations of the spread of Christianity following the persecution are now given, both incidents from the life of Philip. From what follows we gather that Philip was not the apostle of that name: and we may be certain that he was that Philip whose name stands second in the list of the Seven. St. Luke would have had opportunity to learn of these early doings of Philip from him or his prophetic daughters when he stayed in their house at Cæsarea or the last visit to Jerusalem (xxi. 8, 9). Philip went down to the province of Samaria, and there in the chief town, formerly called Samaria, but at that time Sebaste, he proclaimed the Messiah. Until recently all that was known about the Samaritans came from Jewish sources, especially the account of their origin given in 2 Kings xvii. From such sources it was supposed that the Samaritans were mostly non-Israelite by race and heathen in religion. It has now been shown that they were of Israelite stock, the remains of the Northern tribes that were left behind when their companions were led away captive into



gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard,

Assyria; and that they had probably no more admixture of foreign blood than the Jews. In religion they followed the Pentateuch, so that, except for worshipping God on Mt. Gerizim instead of at Jerusalem, their religion differed but little from that of the Jews. Their separation from the Jewish commonwealth was entirely the fault of the Jews in the days of Darius I (520 B.C.) who refused to allow the Samaritans to join in building the temple and worshipping there. That rejection of the Samaritans deepened the political rivalry that existed from the days of the divided kingdom; and it was made permanent when the Samaritans, somewhere about 330 B.C. built a temple to Yahweh on Mt. Gerizim. A small colony of them exists to the present day at Nablous, the ancient Shechem, and they continue to observe the Mosaic Law more faithfully than the modern Jews, for they observe the full ceremony of the Passover, including the slaughter of the lambs, whereas the modern Jews omit the sacrifice, and practically only observe the feast of Unleavened Bread.<sup>1</sup> To the present day the Samaritans look forward to the coming of the Messiah. An Irish doctor a few years ago warned them that if they did not marry non-Samaritans they would soon be an extinct race. They replied that it did not matter, for when there was only one Samaritan left their Messiah would come. The fact that their

<sup>1</sup> See Montgomery, *The Samaritans*, and L. E. Browne, *Early Judaism*.

and saw the signs which he did. For *from* 7 many of those which had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city. 8

But there was a certain man, Simon by 9 name, which beforetime in the city used

Messianic hope was so strong that it persists in this form to the present day, explains how it was that Philip's preaching of the Messiah awakened a response in their hearts. How their hearts must have warmed when, of that Jewish race who had rejected them and hated them of old, one came declaring that the Messiah had come. It would not be very bold to conjecture that Philip told them the story of the Good Samaritan, and that they called to mind the prophecy of Ezekiel 'Thus saith the Lord God. Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions: and I will put them with it, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand' (Ezek. xxxvii. 19). The presence of the Messiah working with Philip was made manifest in the signs of healing and casting out of evil spirits that were wrought by his hands. The Samaritans were filled with great joy at the news that their fervent expectations of the coming of the Messiah were now fulfilled.

9-13. Among the Samaritans who listened to Philip's preaching was a magician Simon. Magic

sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one :  
**10** to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power  
**11** of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had  
**12** amazed them with his sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both

means the exercise of supposed power by which Gods and men are brought under the control of the magician. It is based upon an idea of the universe in which morals have no place. It contradicts the idea of a God who acts from moral choice, and indeed contradicts the whole conception of the moral government of the world. Power is conceived as divorced altogether from morality, and is vested in the man who has discovered some secret words or numbers. Examples of magic are to be found everywhere among primitive peoples, and as survivals among people who observe higher religions. It has a strong attraction for those who would attain their ends without regard to God or man ; and the magician who, for a fee, can secure such ends for his clients, is held in universal reverence, fear, and sometimes hate. Such was Simon, who so convinced the people of his power that they called him the Great Power of God, a name known to us elsewhere in inscriptions and magical formulae. The word translated 'which is

men and women. And Simon also himself <sup>13</sup> believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.

Now when the apostles which were at <sup>14</sup> Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter

called ' or ' so called ' in verse 10 was added either by St. Luke or by some later scribe (it is not present in all the MSS) to indicate that the title was falsely assumed. When Simon saw the wonderful works of healing performed by Philip he recognized them as greater than his own powers. But he thought they were powers of the same order, not noticing the moral distinction between magical powers, which were mostly used to cause harm to others, and the beneficent works of the Spirit which were performed by the hands of Philip. Simon therefore, thinking that by becoming a Christian he would become a more powerful magician, presented himself with the other Samaritans for baptism.

14-17. The success of Philip in Samaria attracted the attention of the apostles, and Peter and John went to visit the new converts. As on the later occasion when Barnabas was sent to Antioch, we may assume that the purpose of the apostolic visit was twofold, to investigate the conditions under which the extension of the gospel was taking place, and to impart to the new congregation a spiritual gift. The form by which the gift was delivered was by the

- 15 and John : who, when they were come down,  
prayed for them, that they might receive the  
16 Holy Ghost : for as yet he was fallen upon  
none of them : only they had been baptized

laying on of hands ; the gift itself was the Holy Spirit ; the sign by which the gift was recognized is not told, but it very probably was the sign of the tongues as at Pentecost and at the baptism of Cornelius. What is the meaning of this event, that Philip was unable to impart a gift which only came when the apostles laid their hands on the converts ? The usual answer to this question is to say that this laying on of hands was the rite which we know as Confirmation which can only be administered by bishops. This answer is perfectly true, but it tells us nothing. It only leaves us asking why the gift of confirmation can only be received at the hands of bishops. The Acts really gives us the answer, if only we look for it. The great mark of the early Church was the fellowship, arising from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Up till the coming of Peter and John, the Samaritan converts were separate from the rest of the disciples. Philip had no commission from the Church as a whole to admit these new Christians into the fellowship of the Church. He admitted them as Christians by baptism into fellowship with Christ, but they as yet lacked the fellowship with the Church, which represents the body of Christ on earth. Peter and John did not come on their own authority to minister magical powers inherent in them as apostles. They were sent by the whole apostolate and by the

into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid 17  
they their hands on them, and they received  
the Holy Ghost. Now when Simon saw that 18  
through the laying on of the apostles' hands  
the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them

laying on of hands they received the newly made Christians into the fellowship of the whole body. That fellowship was, as we have seen, a spiritual fact, the presence of the Holy Spirit pervading the whole Church. It is from this point of view that we should consider the position of the separated sects of the Church of the present day. If we say they have no bishops, nor apostolic succession, and therefore lack the means of grace, we appear to give to bishops and to apostolic succession a magical potency. We ought rather to say that by their separation from the Great Church they have separated themselves from the universal fellowship. Out of harmony with the universal fellowship they cannot enjoy to the full the Spirit who pervades the Church and inspires its fellowship. The Great Church also suffers by their exclusion, because the fellowship is confined within narrow limits instead of extending to the Christians of the separated bodies. The importance of bishops and apostolic succession is then seen to be, not anything magical, but simply the sign of unity and fellowship with the Great Church.

18-24. Simon, whose mind was working in the circle of ideas which we call magic, had no understanding of the meaning of admission into the Christian fellowship. He regarded the laying on of

19 money, saying, Give me also this power, that  
on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may  
20 receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto  
him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou  
hast thought to obtain the gift of God with

hands by the apostles in much the same way as some valiant defenders of apostolic succession, who regard it as a mechanical transmission of a gift in the same way that a row of men pass buckets of water along from one to another from the tank to the burning house. He imagined that the gift of the Spirit was in the keeping of the apostles and could be bought just as he might buy from a fellow-magician the secret of a new magic square. St. Peter saw at once the moral darkness in which he lay, the result of the circle of immoral magical ideas in which his thoughts moved, and pronounced a curse on his money. St. Peter did not curse Simon. It was evident that Simon himself with his perverted ideas was rushing headlong into destruction, and St. Peter committed Simon's money to that same end of destruction, telling him that owing to his completely immoral outlook (his heart was not straight in the sight of God) he had no share in the fellowship which was the content of the Christian preaching and the substance of the gift. Repentance, a complete change of outlook was necessary, and St. Peter recommended him to pray to God for forgiveness for the perverse trend of his thoughts, for as he was he would be like a root bearing a fruit of bitter galls (for himself and others), like a chain binding himself and others with the bonds of



money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this **21**  
matter: for thy heart is not right before God.  
Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and **22**  
pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy  
heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that **23**  
thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the

unrighteousness (R. V. margin). Simon apparently did not repent of his perverse ideas. Only he feared the awful results that St. Peter had depicted and asked him to pray to God for deliverance from them. If he had intended to set himself right with God, he would himself have made confession to God and prayed for guidance. His mind was still moving in the circle of ideas of magic, and his request to St. Peter and St. John was really a request that they would use their influence with God to avert the evil consequences. He had no thought of rooting out the moral evil that lurked within his own heart.

In later Christian literature all sorts of stories were current about Simon Magus. The earliest form of these legends is that given by Justin Martyr who wrote about A.D. 150. He says that Simon was a Samaritan, and was believed by Samaritans and others to be 'the first god', and indeed that he described himself as God above all rule and authority and power. He also says that Simon went to Rome in the reign of Claudius; and by the power of demons he worked miracles; and a statue of him was erected in Rome bearing the inscription 'To Simon the Holy God'. Curiously enough the image Justin referred

- 24 bond of iniquity. And Simon answered and said, Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me.
- 25 They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

to was found in Rome in 1574, and has proved to be a statue dedicated to a deity named Semo. It is probable that Justin was altogether mistaken about the visit to Rome; but with regard to Simon's doings in Samaria, Justin's own home, he may have had accurate information. From the behaviour of Simon recorded in Acts we get the word 'simony' meaning the sin of attempting to purchase spiritual gifts or spiritual preferment for money. The *Apostolic Canons* (fourth century) say, 'If any bishop, presbyter or deacon, obtain this dignity for money, both he that is ordained and the ordainer shall be deposed, and also cut off from all communion, as Simon Magus was by Peter'.

25. This verse is interesting as showing how wholeheartedly the apostles entered into the movement for extending the gospel to the Samaritans. They were not satisfied with bearing their witness and preaching about Jesus in the city of Samaria itself; but in the villages of Samaria through which they passed on their homeward journey they proclaimed the good news.

But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, **26** saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert. And he arose and **27** went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem for to

26-40. Soon after his work in Samaria, or perhaps while he was still there, Philip received a divine command to go southwards on the road leading from Jerusalem to the old city of Gaza. The old city had been devastated in 96 B.C. and a new city had been built near the sea. Later the old city had revived, but it is here described as 'desert Gaza' to distinguish it from the maritime Gaza which was off the main road.<sup>1</sup> At some point on this road from Jerusalem to Gaza, Philip was overtaken by a chariot, probably not very far from Jerusalem if we are to allow sufficient time for a long conversation before Gaza was reached. In the chariot was an Ethiopian eunuch, a man of high position, holding the important post of Treasurer<sup>2</sup> in the Court of the Queen of Meroe, a kingdom of Abyssinia. The eunuch was returning from worshipping at Jerusalem. It is possible that he was a Jew, but more probable that he was a

<sup>1</sup> See G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> The Persian title *کنچور* lies behind the Greek expression used here.

28 worship ; and he was returning and sitting in  
his chariot, and was reading the prophet  
29 Isaiah. And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go  
30 near, and join thyself to this chariot. And  
Philip ran to him, and heard him reading  
Isaiah the prophet, and said, understandest

foreigner, who, unable to become a proselyte, had become one of the class of those who feared God. It may have been by chance that he was reading from the later chapters of Isaiah ; but it is perhaps more likely that as a foreigner who had attached himself to the Jewish religion, he had found particular pleasure in reading the book that told how the Servant of the Lord was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. If this was not the first time he had read the book he would be particularly attracted by Isa. lvi. 3-5, which offers a place in the worship of Yahweh to eunuchs, who were excluded by the law of the Pentateuch (Deut. xxiii. 1). We may imagine that as the chariot drove past him, Philip heard the eunuch reading aloud, and recognized some of the opening words of Isa. liii ; then running after the chariot till he caught it up he heard the words which are quoted here, and asked the eunuch whether he understood.

The early Christians turned with great eagerness to the writings of Second Isaiah, in which was prophesied the extension of the gospel beyond the bounds of Israel. Their attention was perhaps first turned seriously towards that book when our Lord opened the minds of the two men on the road to

thou what thou readest? And he said, how **31**  
can I, except some one shall guide me? And  
he besought Philip to come up and sit with

Emmaus and showed that the Messiah must suffer. But He had been conscious of the importance of the book from early in His ministry when He preached from the text 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Isa. lxi). At the time when Second Isaiah preached his words fell for the most part on deaf ears. The Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon had no intention of extending the good news beyond their own nation, and only a few writers, among whom stand out preeminently the authors of Jonah and Ruth, dared to hold up the ideal of an all-embracing religion. The Jews developed the idea of a Messianic king, but ignored the other ideal of the Suffering Servant, and, as far as we know, the two ideas were never combined till the possibility of a suffering Messiah was shown in Christ reigning from the Cross. Thus we can imagine how the early Christians, with this new idea in their minds, turned afresh to Second Isaiah and found there the long neglected ideal of a universal and spiritual religion. Stephen quoted from ch. lxxvi the verses showing that God's presence could not be localized in a man-made temple. But above all the fifty-third chapter, which depicts the triumph through self-sacrifice of the ideal Servant of the Lord, seemed a veritable description of the experiences of Christ. The exact translation and interpretation of Isa. liii is difficult, partly perhaps owing to the bad state of preservation of the Hebrew text. The Greek

32 him. Now the place of the scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter ;  
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,  
So he openeth not his mouth :

translators found it difficult, and their translation does not quite represent the Hebrew text as we now have it. In the Hebrew text the idea of the Servant triumphing through his suffering appears first in verse 10 ; but it is possible that the Greek translators took verse 8 as referring to triumph, meaning that the followers of the Servant would be very numerous, and that his life was removed by death from the earthly to the heavenly sphere. The eunuch was of course reading the Greek translation. The exact interpretation of the two verses quoted does not really matter, as it was the whole chapter which the eunuch was reading and which Philip was interpreting to him. It is not surprising that the eunuch was unable to understand the chapter, and asked of whom the prophet was speaking, for even among scholars of the present day there has been great difference of opinion on this very point. It is all the more difficult when we remember that a prophecy has to be interpreted in a double sense, first the sense that it had at the time when it was written for the particular circumstances of the original readers or hearers, and secondly the sense in which the eternal verities it contains are applicable to other times and places. Opinion of scholars is settling in the direction of

In his humiliation his judgement was **33**  
taken away :

His generation who shall declare ?

For his life is taken from the earth.

believing that the original meaning of the Servant of the Lord was the nation of Israel and the task to which the nation was called. But in presenting this call to his nation the prophet was developing a principle of self-sacrifice and altruistic service much wider than the needs of his own day. Our Lord showed by His life and teaching that the principle of self-sacrifice for others should rule the lives of each one of us. He in His life was actuated entirely by that principle, so that He is the only one who has really fulfilled the prophecy. We may be sure that if Second Isaiah was able from his home beyond the grave to see the events of earth he must have recognized in the life of Jesus the fulfilment of his hopes. In this sense Philip was perfectly right in preaching Jesus in answer to the eunuch's question ; and we ought similarly to bear in mind that the Old Testament is only of use to us in so far as it is the stretching out of men's thoughts as they were feeling after the perfect truth as it is in Jesus. The eunuch was completely convinced of the truth of Philip's explanation, and must have especially rejoiced that now that the spiritual reign of Messiah had begun he was no longer to be excluded by reason of his physical condition from the fellowship of the saints. The journey of the eunuch and Philip together can scarcely



34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said,  
I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet  
35 this? of himself, or of some other? And  
Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from  
36 this scripture, preached unto him Jesus. And  
as they went on the way, they came unto a  
certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold,  
*here is* water; what doth hinder me to be

have been more than two or three hours, but apparently the time was long enough for Philip to be convinced of the eunuch's sincere intentions, and therefore he did not refuse when the eunuch asked for baptism then and there. Prudence might have suggested delay, for the eunuch was going far away to a country where he would probably be cut off from Christian fellowship, save in the silence of devotion to Christ. In the mission field at the present day it is universally agreed that a somewhat long time of preparation is good both for the Church and for the convert. It is certain that the early Church made mistakes in too readily baptizing converts, as in the case of Simon of Samaria. But the conditions of the present day in one respect are dissimilar from those of the early Church: our converts may bring from their former religions many valuable gifts, but they never bring that firm insistence on morality and the moral character of God which were the peculiar gift of Judaism.

Immediately after the baptism of the eunuch, Philip was separated from him in some miraculous

baptized? And he commanded the chariot to **38**  
stand still: and they both went down into the  
water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he  
baptized him. And when they came up out **39**  
of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught  
away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no  
more, for he went on his way rejoicing. But **40**  
Philip was found at Azotus: and passing  
through he preached the Gospel to all the  
cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

way, and was next heard of preaching in Ashdod  
(Azotus) and the other cities on the way to Cæsarea.  
The eunuch was not cast down at the sudden departure  
of his teacher, for he was so full of gladness at the  
gospel which he had heard that he went on his way  
rejoicing.

37. This verse is altogether absent from the best  
MSS. The Bezan text has the following, 'And  
Philip said "If thou believest with all thy heart thou  
mayest," and he answered and said, "I believe that  
Jesus Christ is the Son of God,"' though the wording  
varies in the different witnesses. The evidence  
shows that this verse was current as early as the  
second century. If it had been part of the original  
text of Acts there is no conceivable reason why it  
should ever have been omitted. It is easy however  
to understand its insertion at a later time when  
no baptism was administered without a preliminary  
confession of faith.

91 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,

THE FIRST EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH OUTSIDE  
THE JEWISH RACE, ix-xii

1-31. In the eighth chapter St. Luke had explained how the persecution of the Christians had been the means of spreading the faith outside the bounds of Judaea. With chapter ix the persecution is seen entering a new stage in which mob violence was replaced by a determined official attempt to stamp out the new religion. With dramatic power St. Luke shows that this new development of the persecution led to a sudden cessation of the persecution; the persecutor became the leader; and the way was prepared for the great westward advance of the gospel. 'In the merciful irony of God St. Paul had been allowed to be the chief instrument in the scattering of the Church. Now he is set apart to make that seemingly wasteful sowing fruitful for a distant harvest.'<sup>1</sup>

1-9. The conversion of St. Paul was such an important event not only in his own life, but in the progress of the gospel, that we are given a great deal of information about it. St. Paul himself frequently referred to it. St. Luke has recorded two speeches, before the mob in Jerusalem (Acts xxii), and before Agrippa (xxvi), in which St. Paul gave a full account of it; and besides these accounts there are references in 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8 and Gal. i. 15, 16. On a

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Chase, *Credibility of the Acts*, p. 68.

went unto the high priest, and asked of him <sup>2</sup> letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that

different occasion, 2 Cor. xii. 2-4, he had a vision in which he heard ineffable words which he was unable to repeat. But this first vision was not of that ineffable kind; its essential part was the fact that St. Paul was taken hold of by Christ, and bidden to carry the good news far afield. In the records in Acts we are only told that he saw a bright light and heard the voice of Jesus, but the statement in ix. 7 that his companions heard the voice but saw no one would suggest that he himself saw the actual form of Jesus, and this he definitely states in 1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8. The further statement in Acts xxii. 9 that his companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the speaker makes it clear that they both saw a light and heard a sound but that they neither recognized the form of the vision nor understood the words spoken. The way in which St. Paul records this vision in 1 Cor. xv. 8, after the list of appearances of our Lord between the resurrection and ascension, shows that he placed it on the same level of importance and reality as those earlier appearances. It does not prove that his vision was of the same kind as the earlier appearances, and indeed it is perfectly obvious that it was not so. In the appearances to the disciples before the ascension Christ was clothed with bodily form which could be handled. A difference of kind and not only in time is probably what St. Paul meant when he used the curious metaphor of a child born out of due time with regard to his own

if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to

vision. Commentators of a rationalistic tendency have tried to deny the reality of St. Paul's vision, attributing his experience to the hallucinations of a somewhat disordered brain. The answer to such questionings is that St. Paul's subsequent life can only be explained in the light of this vision as a real experience. Now, although such experiences as these are not common to all Christians, nor even to all converts, they are sufficiently well-known in our own day to bear out the truth of this narrative. The following is Sadhu Sundar Singh's own story of his conversion, the similarity of which to St. Paul's experience is remarkable. As far as the Sadhu can remember he did not at the time know the story of St. Paul's conversion. 'Preachers and Christians in general had often come to me and I used to resist them and persecute them. When I was out in any town I got people to throw stones at Christian preachers. I would tear up the Bible and burn it when I had a chance. In the presence of my father I cut up the Bible and other Christian books and put kerosene oil upon them and burnt them. I thought this was a false religion and tried all I could to destroy it. I was faithful to my own religion, but I could not get any satisfaction or peace, though I performed all the ceremonies and rites of that religion. So I thought of leaving it all and committing suicide. Three days after I had burnt the Bible, I woke up about three o'clock in the morning, had my usual bath, and

Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to <sup>3</sup> pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus : and suddenly there shone round about him a light

prayed, " O, God, if there is a God, wilt thou show me the right way or I will kill myself." My intention was that, if I got no satisfaction, I would place my head upon the railway line when the five o'clock train passed by and kill myself. If I got no satisfaction in this life, I thought I would get it in the next. I was praying and praying but got no answer ; and I prayed for half-an-hour longer hoping to get peace. At 4.30 a.m. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire, I looked round, but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying in Hindustani, " How long will you persecute me ? I have come to save you ; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it ? " The thought then came to me, " Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself." So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was

4 out of heaven : and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul,

wishing to get. This was heaven itself. When I got up, the vision had all disappeared ; but although the vision disappeared the peace and joy have remained with me ever since.' <sup>1</sup> It will be seen that this experience corresponds with St. Paul's not only in the circumstances at the time—the previous hatred of Christianity, the light, the form of Christ, the words ' How long will you persecute me ? '—but much more in the after effect of peace and joy and changed life. Nārāyaṇ Vāman Ṭīlak tells the story of an experience of his, in which he gives no details of the actual vision, but emphasizes the change of life that it produced :—<sup>2</sup>

' Ye ask, and so to tell ye I am bold ;  
Yea, with these eyes did I the Christ behold,—  
Awake, not sleeping, did upon Him gaze,  
And at the sight stood trancēd with amaze.  
" My mind wanders," I said, " it cannot be !  
'Tis but my own creation that I see !  
Poor hapless fool ! " —for so did I repine—  
" How crooked and perverse a faith is mine ! "  
Yet was my patient Lord displeased not,  
Nor for one inoment He His child forgot :  
Again He came and stood regarding me ;—  
Ah, surely ne'er was mother such as He !  
I called to Him in sudden agony.  
" My child," He answered, " wherefore dost thou cry ?  
I am before thee, yea, and I within ;  
Merged in a sea of blindness hast thou been."

<sup>1</sup> Streeter and Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Winslow, *Narayan Vaman Tilak*, p. 119.



why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus

“ Lord, grant me eyes to see ! ” I cried again,  
And clasped His feet in ecstasy of pain.  
He raised me up, He held me to His side,  
And then—I cannot tell what did betide ;  
But this alone I know, that from that day  
This self of mind hath vanished quite away.  
Great Lord of yoga, Thou hast yoked with Thee,  
Saith Dāsa, even a poor wight like me ! ’

Tilak, like Sundar Singh, faced the objection that his vision was an hallucination, but both rejected that explanation as impossible on account of the change of life it produced. It is equally certain that St. Paul was convinced of the reality of his experience, and that nothing else can explain his extraordinary career. It is worth quoting one vision of Christ, which did not lead to a change of life. ‘ In his latter days Ramakrishna was thinking of practising the tenets of Christianity. He had seen Jesus in a vision, and for three days he could think of nothing and speak of nothing but Jesus and His love. There was this peculiarity in all his visions—that he always saw them outside himself, but when they vanished they seemed to have entered into him. This was true of Rama, of Śiva, of Kali, of Krishna, of Jesus, and of every other god or goddess or prophet.’<sup>1</sup> What a difference is here ! He was ‘ thinking of practising the tenets of Christianity,’ but did not. Either his

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, p. 51.

6 whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what

vision of Jesus was unreal, or he rejected his opportunity. He did not become Christ-like. Conversions attended by visions among non-Christians are to be judged by the same standard, that is, we must reckon them genuine if they result in a change to higher life and teaching. As an example we may quote the conversion of the Tamil poet Māṇikka Vāṣagar. His youth was spent in study, and by the age of sixteen he had mastered the sacred Śaiva books. He lived in pomp and wealth and in thralldom to the senses. One day as he was on his way to the temple of Madura to worship Śiva, a strange emotion overcame him. He shed tears of joy, the hair of his body stood erect, his tongue trembled, his hands involuntarily made obeisance, his mind melted like wax in the fire, and desire passed from him. He had a vision of Śiva, who received him, taught him, and consecrated him to his service. Straightway were his sins expurgated, and Śiva bade him worship him by song. So he sang hymns of praise for Śiva's grace. His influence and the power and beauty of his songs contributed much to the downfall of Buddhism and the spread of Śaivism in South India. As Pope well puts it, 'South India needed a personal God, an assurance of immortality, and a call to prayer. These it found in Māṇikka Vāṣagar's compositions.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Condensed from the account given in Cave's *Redemption, Hindu and Christian*, pp. 126-28.

thou must do. And the men that journeyed<sup>7</sup> with him stood speechless, hearing the voice,

In spite of all the errors of Śaivism compared with the truth as we know it, we are obliged to confess that to whatever extent Mānikka Vāsagar's life was raised to a higher level by his vision, and he was able to implant some seeds of truth into his hearers, to that extent he had been in touch with the true God, to that extent the vision had been 'true.'

**The Conversion of St. Paul.** The modern study of psychology helps us to understand such a conversion as that of St. Paul. The psychological explanation of conversion is not an attempt to explain it away, or to deny the impact of spiritual power from outside, but rather seeks to follow the workings of the mind which in such cases lead to a complete reversal of opinions and motives. The opinions that a man holds, and all his mental attitude towards things, the whole conscious working of his mind, represent but a small part of his mind. A far larger part of a man's mind does not normally enter into his consciousness. The conscious part of the mind may be compared with the eleventh part of an iceberg which protrudes above the level of the sea. From the shape of that small portion one could not guess the shape of the remaining ten-elevenths which are hidden beneath the water. Or, perhaps a better illustration would be to compare the conscious mind with the surface of a lake, subject to waves and ripples with every change of wind, and the unconscious mind with the deep

8 but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth ; and when his eyes were opened, he

waters beneath. A man does not normally know whether he is a hero or a coward. By many little acts from childhood he may have been building up in his unconscious mind the one characteristic or the other. He may have quite forgotten such events as the day when he ran away from a dog, or when he overcame his fear and walked across a narrow plank bridge ; yet those things have left an impression on his unconscious mind ; and it is only when he is faced by some great crisis, as for instance a house on fire, that he discovers what is in him. There is here no relentless *karma*. His past deeds do not remain all equally stored within him. The continual exercise of his free-will enables him to select such actions as he chooses, and the selection strengthens impressions of that type, while impressions of a contrary type grow weaker and weaker. Thus though he may have at one time been cowardly, the determination to be brave strengthens whatever records of bravery his unconscious mind may contain and weakens the records of cowardice, till in the moment of crisis the impulse that rushes up into his consciousness is all in the direction of bravery. Such is the normal process by which a coward grows out of his cowardice and gradually becomes a brave man. He may experience many small crises, and at every crisis his bravery becomes more and more evident. And he is conscious of a continual effort to attain that character. The spiritual forces from without that cause the

saw nothing ; and they led him by the hand,

change are twofold : first there is the unseen power which enables him to choose aright more or less with free-will ; and secondly there is the unseen power which strengthens the noble elements and weakens the undesirable elements in his unconscious mind. But the whole process goes on so gradually that the miraculous nature of the change is not perceived. If there were no miracle, i.e. no intervention of an external spiritual power, we should be for ever bound by the law of *karma*—reaping exactly what we had sown, neither more nor less, with mechanical accuracy. It is when the visible change of the conscious mind takes place suddenly, what we call sudden conversion, that all men recognize a miracle. Let us consider the case of St. Paul from this point of view. It must not be supposed that St. Paul before his conversion was a hypocrite because he was a Pharisee. Our Lord's condemnation of scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites did not condemn every member of those classes. A Jewish writer acknowledged that a large proportion of Pharisees were unworthy, but in his estimation one-seventh of them might be classed as God-fearing, and one-seventh attained to the highest stage of being God-loving. We may confidently place St. Paul before his conversion in one of these two classes. God's will was ever before his eyes. It is true that he was altogether mistaken in his views how God's will might be performed. He supposed, in common with all other Pharisees, that it was possible by an effort of the will to perform not

9 and brought him into Damascus. And he was

only all the commandments of the Old Testament but also all those elaborations of the commandments which the 'traditions of men' had invented to fit every possible eventuality of life. His intellectual, fully conscious, life was following this impossible system; but beneath it was the desire to love God or at least to fear Him. His subconscious mind was therefore filled not only with the desire rightly to tithe his mint and anise and cummin, but also with the desire to love or to fear God. Then he came in contact with Stephen, and his intellectual conscious mind was shocked to find a man who treated so lightly the traditions of men, and even the laws of Moses and the age-long traditions of worship of the Jewish race. Such a man, said St. Paul's conscious mind, must be a heretic and worthy of death. But against the desire of his conscious mind, there stole past his consciousness into his unconscious mind the impression of a man who feared and loved God, the impression of a face of angelic beauty turned heavenward, of a soul in touch with the living God. St. Paul's conscious mind continued in the same intellectual conviction that the followers of Jesus were heretics deserving only of torture and imprisonment. But within his unconscious mind the impression of the Christians' love of God found a congenial home side by side with the devotion to God which he had had from childhood's days. Those other impressions of devotion to a code of innumerable regulations had little in common with this impression of love towards

three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

God. As he continued his course of persecuting the Christians the impression of Christ-like love on his unconscious mind cut in deeper and deeper. There was nothing in the dead system of Pharisaism to add strength to the impression of the value of the legal system. It was as if the legal system was a dead weight in one scale of a balance, and on to the other scale was being put quietly, steadily, one little weight after another till suddenly the balance turned. Up till that time his conscious intellectual self had had some support from the unconscious mind within. But with that over-balancing of his unconscious self, the conscious intellectual mind was deprived of all its support. With a sudden flash there was revealed to him his real self within. Jesus was already Lord there; and his conscious mind had been resisting what his real inner self approved. He saw Jesus actually there in glory. The whole of his intellectual system tumbled down like a house built of children's bricks: his intellectual life was empty, blind, corresponding to the physical blindness of his eyes. Slowly, gradually, he had to build up a new intellectual system to fit the fact of the Lordship of Christ. He might in a few days' time preach his conviction that Jesus was Messiah, but to build up a stable intellectual structure was a slow and difficult process requiring the retirement for years to Tarsus and the desert of Arabia.



- 10** Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias ; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, **11** Behold, I *am here*, Lord. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus : **12** for behold, he prayeth ; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.

10-19. There is no record how the Christians first reached Damascus, but it was most probably in their dispersion following the death of Stephen. Saul the persecutor had no certain information about the Christians in Damascus, as is shown by the 'if' of verse 2. But if he found any, as he fully expected, the letters he carried from Caiaphas the High Priest would probably be sufficiently weighty to induce the Jewish leaders in Damascus to hand over any Christian Jews for trial in Jerusalem. When Saul actually arrived at Damascus his attitude was very different from what he had intended. The one whose ministrations he was glad to receive was an obscure Christian Jew named Ananias. Ananias had a vision of God, and in response to that vision went to minister to Saul. God told Ananias in the vision that Saul was expecting him. Verse 12 may mean that Saul had had a second vision since arriving at Damascus, but probably only refers to the vision on the road in which the voice had said, ' Rise and enter into the city and it

But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard **13**  
from many of this man, how much evil he did  
to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath **14**  
authority from the chief priests to bind all that  
call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto **15**  
him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel  
unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles  
and kings, and the children of Israel: for I **16**  
will shew him how many things he must

shall be told thee what thou must do.' We may therefore surmise that Saul on arriving at Damascus was much perplexed, wondering in what way God's will would be revealed, groping in spiritual darkness as in physical blindness, praying constantly for guidance. The arrival of Ananias in answer to his prayers brought light spiritual and physical to him. The language used may imply that something like scales actually fell from his eyes, or may simply mean that vision returned as suddenly as if his eyes had been uncovered. But we must not look here for medical terms. The blindness was not a physical thing arising from the glare of natural light, but was a state corresponding to the spiritual darkness in which he found he was walking compared with the glorious revelation in the face of Jesus Christ of which he had now had a foretaste. Ananias, strengthened by the vision he had received, hailed Saul as a brother, announced his restoration to sight, and admitted him into Christian fellowship by baptism.

15, 16. If one can see the providential hand of

17 suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath

God in the political conditions of the first century A.D., and in the general search for a new and satisfying religion, which made possible the rapid spread of Christianity, much more clearly can we see His hand in the choice of the persecutor Saul to be the evangelist of the West. Of Jewish parents and educated in the school of Gamaliel at Jerusalem he would have a secure hold on all that was most to be valued in the Jewish religion; born at Tarsus in Cilicia he would have the wider outlook which marked the Jews of the Dispersion; as a Roman Citizen he had a passport throughout the Empire, and more security than others; speaking Greek as well as Aramaic he could converse with ease wherever he went; with a heart pulsating in sympathy for all humanity he had the power of winning the confidence, the affection and the devoted loyalty of many; with intellectual powers surpassing any of his time he could more than supply his contemporaries with their need of a systematized faith, leaving a surplus wealth in his written works to be drawn upon by many generations to come; and perhaps most important of all, not having known Jesus Christ (at any rate intimately) in the days of His ministry, and yet having known Him in the Spirit more intimately

sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And **18** straightway there fell from his eyes as it were

than all, he was fitted to prepare the way for the great mass of Christians who know the Master not after the flesh but mystically and in sacraments. The impulse that made St. Paul go forth into the Gentile world with a message of peace and goodwill arose primarily out of remorse for his action in having taken part in the murder of Stephen, and for having persecuted others who were guilty of no crime. The sufferings of Stephen and the early Christians were thus the means of sending St. Paul out on his missionary labours, and so of the extension of Christianity in Europe. Probably no martyrdoms in the world's history have been so fruitful for good for all ages. A parallel may be quoted from Indian history: the spread of Buddhism in India, and of those ideals of gentleness which have survived the disappearance of Buddhism, was due to the remorse of King Asoka for the sufferings caused by his conquest of Kalinga. 'The Kalinga war, which was the turning point in Asoka's career, became one of the decisive events in the history of the world. The miseries of the campaign, the sufferings of the prisoners, and the wailings for the dead were soon forgotten by the vanquished, as they have been forgotten by other conquered nations after thousands of wars; but the effect that they produced upon the conscience of the victor is still traceable in the world of the twentieth

scales, and he received his sight ; and he arose  
19 and was baptized ; and he took food and was  
strengthened.

century.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the sufferings of St. Stephen were taken up by St. Paul, and it is not surprising that the words that Ananias heard in the vision spoke rather of St. Paul's sufferings than of his works, calling to mind the forecast of our Lord about all His followers (Luke xxi. 12), ' They shall lay their hands on you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake.'

19-31. St. Luke has compressed into these few verses the history of St. Paul for two or three years after his conversion. Another account of the same period is given by St. Paul himself in Gal. i. 15-20 ; and as he was solemnly recording it in order to establish his true relationship with the other apostles we may be confident of its absolute accuracy. He says, ' But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me ; but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, except James the Lord's

<sup>1</sup> Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 95.

And he was certain days with the disciples

brother. Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not' (Gal. i. 15-20). Acts tells us nothing of the visit to Arabia, but allows room for such a visit by the vague note of time in ix. 23, 'when many days were fulfilled.' It is almost universally agreed that Arabia here means, not the great peninsular that we call by that name, nor even the peninsular of Sinai where Moses had made the covenant with Israel, but the kingdom of the Nabataean Arabs, whose border came close up to the City of Damascus. Galatians does not tell us anything about preaching in Damascus and suggests that the departure to Arabia was without any delay. It would not however contradict Galatians if St. Paul spent a few weeks in Damascus disputing with the Jews; and we might conjecture that he began at once to preach with zeal but found that he was not properly equipped for the task, and needed a period of quiet waiting upon God. He must have returned to Damascus and preached there until he was forced to escape because of the Jewish plot. The Jews guarded the city gates to catch him, but his disciples let him down through a window over the wall of the city in a basket. The same event is also recorded in 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33, where St. Paul gives the further information that the 'ethnarch' of Aretas the king guarded the city. The fact that Aretas had an ethnarch in Damascus does not prove that Damascus was at that time in the dominions of Aretas. The term 'ethnarch' was used in the first century A.D. of the governor of the Jews

20 which were at Damascus. And straightway in

in Alexandria; and so could presumably be used for a governor sent by Aretas to look after his subjects who were living in Damascus. It has been suggested that St. Paul had been preaching in the kingdom of the Nabataean Arabs, and had stirred up the anger of Aretas so that he tried to have St. Paul arrested in Damascus.<sup>1</sup> That is possible, but as we know how the Jews behaved in other cities visited by St. Paul, it seems equally possible that they induced the ethnarch, perhaps with bribes, to give them his help in trying to arrest St. Paul. When St. Paul arrived in Jerusalem the other Christians were afraid to receive him, not believing that he was a sincere convert, but Barnabas stood surety for him and explained to them the course of events. This visit to Jerusalem is described in Gal. i. 18-19 already quoted, according to which he went to visit St. Peter and saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. Gal. i. 22 says further, 'I was unknown by face to the Churches of Judaea which are in Christ.' This statement is so explicit that it cannot be made to agree with the statement in Acts ix. 28, 29, according to which St. Paul on this occasion made the city of Jerusalem his headquarters, going 'in and out' and argued with the Greek-speaking Jews for a long enough period to rouse their ire and endanger his life. So complete is the disagreement between the two accounts that it is necessary either to conclude

<sup>1</sup> Kirsopp Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, Appendix III, p. 320.



the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he

that they refer to different visits, or that St. Luke here is extraordinarily inaccurate. I venture to suggest that the difficulty has arisen through a primitive corruption of the text, the words 'in Damascus' (verse 27) and 'into Jerusalem' (verse 28) having been originally written by some scribe in the margin of his manuscript as references to indicate the movements of St. Paul, and that the words were at a later time accidentally copied into the text. Without those additions the whole difficulty vanishes. The text of Acts ix. 27-30 will then be translated as follows:— 'But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had been preaching boldly in the name of Jesus, and he had been with them, going in and going out, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord, and had been speaking and disputing with the Hellenists, but they had gone about to kill him. And the brethren recognized him (that is, as a disciple) and brought him down to Cæsarea and sent him forth to Tarsus.' So translated the whole sentence down to the words 'to kill him' is part of Barnabas's report of what happened at Damascus, agreeing perfectly with what the narrative had already declared. It should be noticed that the words 'into Jerusalem' as they stand in our present text come very harshly after the words 'going in and going out' so much so that a number of manuscripts have omitted 'going out,' while others have changed 'into' to 'in.' The latter

21 is the Son of God. And all that heard him

emendation has been tacitly adopted by R. V. which reads 'at Jerusalem.' Further our present text, as always translated, never mentions the acceptance of St. Paul as a disciple by the other apostles, which we naturally expect after his introduction by Barnabas. There are two other places in Acts where 'into Jerusalem' seems to have been added to the original text. In xii. 25 the presence of the words 'into Jerusalem' has caused endless trouble in both ancient and modern times. In ancient times the words were altered into 'from Jerusalem' in order to make sense; and in modern times commentators have found it almost impossible to extract any meaning from the reading 'into Jerusalem.' At length Bartlet<sup>1</sup> has suggested that the words are a primitive corruption, and Kirsopp Lake<sup>2</sup> is half inclined to agree with him. In iv. 5, the words 'into Jerusalem' are unnecessary, though not quite impossible. Many manuscripts have altered them into 'in Jerusalem,' and two manuscripts (probably rightly) omit them altogether. If then we may assume the correctness of the conjecture that the words 'into Jerusalem' have been inserted ix. 28 as well as in xii. 25 and iv. 5, we find that St. Luke's only interest in this visit to Jerusalem was St. Paul's acceptance by the brethren at Jerusalem. There is no mention of any activities in the city or neighbourhood, nor of any fresh plot against his life, agreeing

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on Acts in the *Century Bible*,

<sup>2</sup> *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 318.

were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havock of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. But Saul increased the more **22**

perfectly with what St. Paul has left recorded in Galatians that the visit only lasted a fortnight. At the end of the visit St. Paul says (Gal. i. 21) that he went into the parts of Syria and Cilicia, using the name of the Roman Province: he may or may not have spent time in Syria on his way to Cilicia. St. Luke in Acts tells us that the brethren took him to Cæsarea, presumably to take ship from thence, and sent him forth to Tarsus: he may have sailed direct to Tarsus in Cilicia, or may have touched at Syrian ports on the way. Anyhow there is no contradiction between the two statements. But before leaving Jerusalem there is one more event of great importance which St. Paul mentioned in his speech in Acts xxii. 17-21, 'And it came to pass that when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw Him saying unto me, "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me." And I said, "Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee; and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and consenting and keeping the garments of them that slew him." And He said unto me, "Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence

in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

- 23 And when many days were fulfilled, the  
 24 Jews took counsel together to kill him : but  
 their plot became known to Saul. And they  
 watched the gates also day and night that they  
 25 might kill him : but his disciples took him by

unto the Gentiles." ' So long as Acts ix. 29 was read as saying that St. Paul left Jerusalem on account of a Jewish plot, it fitted ill with this occasion of Acts xxii. 17-21 when he left Jerusalem in obedience to a heavenly vision. Ramsay felt the discrepancy so seriously that he insisted that two different visits were described.<sup>1</sup> This difficulty also vanishes with our emendation of the text, and we find St. Paul receiving a further confirmation of his call to work among the Gentiles which he had first received on the road to Damascus, and then going forth to Tarsus to work quietly in preparation for his great adventures of the future.

20. He proclaimed Jesus that He is the Son of God. Bousset has drawn attention to St. Luke's accuracy in attributing this doctrine to St. Paul. He says, ' St. Paul, in his monumental introduction of the Epistle to the Romans more than once summarizes his preaching as the gospel of the Son of God (Rom. i. 3, 4, 9). What comforts him for the present

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 62.

night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

And when he was come to Jerusalem, he **26** assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, **27** and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them going **28**

imperfection of his Christ-life here in the flesh, and lifts him up out of it, is faith in the Son of God (Gal. ii. 20). The kernel of his preaching is that God sent His Son (Gal. iv. 4), did not spare His only Son (Rom. viii. 32). The only time that the author of the Acts uses the title "The Son of God" is when he is summarizing Pauline preaching (Acts ix. 20).<sup>1</sup> St. Paul avoids actually speaking of Christ as God, although he links the name of Christ with that of God in such a way as would be blasphemous if Christ were not divine. He no doubt felt the difficulty of attributing Godhead to Christ and at the same time maintaining the unity of God. We have seen that some of the early Christians spoke of Christ as the 'Servant of the Lord' (Acts iii. 13, 26; iv. 27, 30) identifying Him with the Servant of the Lord of Second Isaiah. This title continued to be used for a

<sup>1</sup> Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 151.

- 29 in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord : and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews ; but  
30 they went about to kill him. And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.  
31 So the church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified ;

while in Christian circles, particularly in liturgical formulae, but was gradually dropped in favour of the title ' Son of God ', partly because the latter appeared to be of greater honour, and partly because the increasing number of Gentiles in the Church made it of less interest to identify Christ with the Servant of Second Isaiah. To Moslems the use of the term ' Son of God ' is a great offence, because they regard it as an infringement of the unity of God, and suppose that Christians attribute generation to God. Dr. Zwemer has pointed out that for those Moslems who understand Arabic it is easy to explain that Christ is **ابن الله** Son of God in a metaphorical sense, and not **ولد الله** Son of God in a physical sense.

31. The persecution was over. Not only in Jerusalem itself, but throughout Palestine where the Christians had scattered, there was peace from Jewish attacks. This is the only mention of Galilee in the Acts, and tells us nothing of the progress of the gospel in that part where most of our Lord's ministry was spent. See Chapter III of the introduction,

and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied.

‘What the Acts does not tell us.’ With the end of the persecution St. Luke felt that a distinct stage had been completed in the history of the gospel, and in this verse 31, he pauses to see the progress hitherto attained. Four other times he pauses thus in the course of his story. The first time, vi. 7, is after the appointment of the Seven, marking the first public recognition of the Hellenist or Greek-speaking element in the Church. The second is the verse now before us. The third is xii. 24, marking the completion of the famine relief sent from Antioch to Jerusalem, just before the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. The fourth xvi. 5, marks the completion of the work in the Province of Galatia, before the missionaries proceeded on the journey which led them to Macedonia and Achaia. The fifth xix. 20 follows the burning of magical books at Ephesus, the great triumph of St. Paul’s work there, and practically the conclusion of his work in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. It is too much to speak of these verses, which summarize the progress of the gospel, as St. Luke’s division of his book into chapters. He pauses on each occasion in thankfulness and praise for some signal demonstration of the power of God. In three of the five occasions this demonstration of power marks the conclusion of a period of faithful work in some particular place—the famine relief in Jerusalem, the evangelization of Galatia, the evangelization of Asia—and is naturally followed by



32 And it came to pass, as Peter went through-  
out all parts, he came down also to the saints  
33 which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found  
a certain man named Æneas, which had kept  
34 his bed eight years ; for he was palsied. And  
Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ  
healeth thee : arise, and make thy bed. And  
35 straightway he arose. And all that dwelt at  
Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned  
to the Lord.

some new development, thus giving the impression of chapter divisions.

32-43. Before going on to tell the story of St. Paul's mission, St. Luke stops to tell of the doings of St. Peter. In this he was very accurate, for not only did St. Paul disappear for some time from the scene, but it was a historical fact that St. Peter was the first to admit an uncircumcised Gentile unto the Christian Church. As an introduction to that critical event, the baptism of Cornelius, St. Luke mentions two miracles worked by St. Peter, probably only examples of many such works wrought by the hands of the early Christians. There was almost a play on the words when St. Peter said to Aeneas, ' Jesus Christ healeth thee,' for the name ' Jesus ' was very similar to the word for ' healing'. Wherever the name of Jesus was preached, those who understood Greek would immediately think of a God of Healing. Healing, salvation of body as well as soul, was most earnestly sought after in those days. Many sought it in the

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple **36** named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And **37** it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. And as **38** Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, intreating him, Delay not to come

cult of a Greek deity Aesculapius, whose worship spread to Rome and from thence all over the West. He was known as 'God the Saviour' and 'Warm friend of man.' We can therefore well understand how readily people were drawn to Christianity which could show so many cases of healing in the name of Jesus. Gradually in the history of Christianity healing became a matter, not of faith, but of magic ritual: thus Tertullian says, 'We Christians make the sign of the cross at once over a bitten foot, say a word of exorcism, and rub it with the blood of the crushed animal.' With the loss of faith in Christ to heal, the gift of healing disappeared almost entirely from the Church. By the time of Origen miraculous healings were becoming things of the past, though traces still remained. He speaks <sup>1</sup> of 'the extraordinary wonders, whose reality can be proved by this circumstance, among many other things, that traces

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Celsum*, I, ii.

39 on unto us. And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made,  
40 while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw

of them still exist among those who live according to the will of the Logos.' In our own generation the returning tide of faith in Christ has brought back in increasing measure the power to heal in His name. The report of St. Peter's miracles reached Joppa, the port of Jerusalem twelve miles from Lydda, so that, when a Christian Jewess named Tabitha or Dorcas died, her friends sent an urgent message to St. Peter to come at once. The raising of Tabitha to life bears strong resemblance to the raising of Jairus's daughter by our Lord at which he was present, the chief difference being that St. Peter took her hand after she had returned to life. He may have feared ceremonial defilement if he had touched the hand of a corpse. First he knelt down and prayed, and then rose and spoke the words, which in Aramaic were 'Tabitha kūm.' To the mind of all present would immediately come the words that our Lord had used, 'Talitha kūm', differing only by a single letter. The reminiscence of those words made it quite unnecessary to say aloud in whose name the command was

Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, 41 and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it 42 became known throughout all Joppa: and many believed on the Lord. And it came to 43 pass, that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

given. But the lack of explicit mention of Christ was felt by scribes and there is evidence for the early existence of an expanded form 'Tabitha, arise in the name of Jesus Christ.'

43. **Joppa.** Joppa was captured about 144 B.C. by Simon Maccabeus, the first and only harbour the Jews ever held. This capture was regarded not merely as a military operation, but as a thoroughly religious measure. Prophecies of distant islands and coastlands waiting for the law of the Lord must have come to the minds of the conquerors, and the possession of a sea-port seemed to bring the fulfilment of such prophecies nearer. In those great days, when Jews took a town within the promised boundaries, they purged it of the heathen and their idols, and settled in it such as would keep the Law. The vigour of the Jewish measures, however, stirred up such opposition that they were not left in undisputed possession of the town. Finally it was added by Augustus to Herod the Great's dominions. Joppa was therefore Jewish as no other town on the coast or maritime plain became. On ground which was free from heathen buildings and rites the Pharisees must have

101 Now *there was* a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band

imitated as far as possible the vigorous measures of the Maccabees, and cherished the ancient and noble hopes which the sea inspired in their race, along with many petty precautions against the foreigners whom it drifted to their feet. This was the state of affairs when St. Peter came down from Jerusalem to Joppa, and dreamt of things clean and unclean, on the house-top overlooking the harbour.<sup>1</sup>

x. 1-xi. 18. This section contains the story of how Cornelius was admitted into the Christian Church, an event of such importance that it was the occasion of special revelations from God both to Cornelius and to St. Peter. Neither the one nor the other had expected such a thing to be possible. The relation between Jew and Gentile was not merely one of mutual contempt. Though they must have mixed a great deal in business they were prevented by the Jewish law from any social intercourse, because social intercourse must include eating together. The Jews were forbidden by their law to interdine with Gentiles for two reasons. First, the Jewish law forbade the eating of many kinds of food, and one of these, namely pork, was a common article of diet among Gentiles. Secondly, in the slaughtering of animals a particular method had to be employed, by which the blood was poured out. This custom dated back to

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 136-38.

called the Italian band, a devout man, and one <sup>2</sup> that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision openly, as it were <sup>3</sup> about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon <sup>4</sup> him, and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial

the days when every animal killed for food was offered as a sacrifice to God, and God's share was the blood which was poured out and on no account to be consumed. The origin of the restrictions of certain kinds of animal food was probably also of a religious character; it has been conjectured that certain animals, such as the pig and the mouse, were at one time regarded as sacred, perhaps the totem animal of the tribe, and as such might not be eaten. Possibly the prohibition of some animals, such as lizards, was not of religious origin, but simply preserved the tradition that such animals were not good for human consumption. But it must be clearly understood that in New Testament times all these prohibitions were obeyed simply on the ground that it was so written in the Law of God. No one in those days would have thought of defending the prohibition on sanitary grounds, e.g., that pork is liable to become bad in a hot climate, nor on humanitarian grounds that the

5 before God. And now send men to Joppa,  
and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter :  
6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose  
7 house is by the sea side. And when the angel  
that spake unto him was departed, he called  
two of his household-servants, and a devout  
soldier of them that waited on him continually ;  
8 and having rehearsed all things unto them, he  
sent them to Joppa.

slaughter of animals was cruel. When our Lord therefore said that the soul is not defiled by the food that enters the stomach, He was abrogating the food-laws which the Jews believed to be of divine origin ; but He was not discussing whether certain foods might be injurious to the system, nor whether kindness to animals demanded a vegetarian diet. The disciples were not quick to disregard the Old Testament food-laws ; in fact other sentences of Christ's about the abiding value of the Law may well have made them hesitate. They only faced the question when it became a choice between breaking the law of the Old Testament or breaking the law of Christian charity with men of another race. It was to a decision on this point that St. Peter's vision led him. ' What God has cleansed make not thou common ' did not only mean that pork or strangled meat might be eaten, much more it meant that no child of God was to be treated as unclean because of Gentile birth. Had it been a matter of hygiene one could imagine St. Peter dining with a Gentile and saying ' You will



Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour : and he became hungry, and desired to eat : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance ; and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth : wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and

excuse me from eating pork, as I fear it might not agree with me ' without breaking the rule of Christian charity. So a high caste Hindu might quite reasonably decline to dine with a sweeper if his hands were dirty ; but he could not decline to dine with him on the ground of his sweeper birth without breaking the law of charity. St. Peter's vision convinced him that he ought to go into Cornelius's house and presumably he was prepared to eat there if invited to do so. When he heard how the angel had appeared to Cornelius, he was ready to preach the Gospel to him. In the course of his sermon he said that ' in every nation he that feareth God and worked righteousness is acceptable to Him.' But it is doubtful whether even St. Peter was prepared for what followed—the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on uncircumcised Gentiles. Much more was that special sign required for St. Peter's companions, who had not seen the vision. But when they saw the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they could hold back no longer.

13 fowls of the heaven. And there came a voice  
14 to him, Rise, Peter ; kill and eat. But Peter  
said, Not so, Lord ; for I have never eaten  
15 anything that is common and unclean. And a  
voice *came* unto him again the second time,  
What God hath cleansed, make not thou com-  
16 mon. And this was done thrice : and straight-  
way the vessel was received up into heaven.

For, as Christians, they must have recognized that the gift of the Spirit was something greater than any gift offered by the old Judaism. None of them dared to raise their voices in protest against admitting Cornelius into the Christian Church. Very similar was the attitude of the Jewish Christians of Judæa when they heard of the incident. St. Peter's action was immediately called in question, and he had to defend himself before them at Jerusalem. But when they heard the story of his vision and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they were filled not only with amazement but also with joy, and glorified God saying, ' Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.'

As we shall see later on, the evident will of God that Cornelius and his family should be included in the scheme of grace did not settle once for all the admission of all Gentiles freely into the Christian Church. But we should make a mistake if we supposed that the idea of inclusion of Gentiles was new. The idea had first been put forward more than five and a half centuries previously by Second Isaiah. It

Now while Peter was much perplexed in 17 himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, and called and 18 asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodging there. And while Peter 19 thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise, 20 and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them. And Peter 21 went down to the men, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore

will be remembered that he definitely placed before the Jews the task that Israel, the Servant of the Lord, was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles (Isa. xlii. 6, xlix. 6). Second Isaiah had no doubt intended that at the very time when the Jews had the opportunity of returning to Palestine from Babylon they should use their deliverance from exile as an argument to persuade the heathen of the power and righteousness of Jehovah. The Jews however were not ready for such a message, and we find soon afterwards that the prophet Zechariah postponed the inclusion of the Gentiles till after the coming of Messiah.<sup>1</sup> The idea of including Gentiles in the Holy people of God at that time was altogether put aside, but it remained a

<sup>1</sup> Zech. viii. 20-23, see *Early Judaism*, p. 91.

22 ye are come? And they said, Cornelius a centurion, a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned *of God* by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear 23 words from thee. So he called them in and lodged them.

And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from

pious hope for what would happen when Messiah came. As a kind of compromise we find that in our Lord's time many Gentiles were admitted to the Jewish religion on condition that they adopted Jewish nationality and observed the whole Jewish law. Our Lord during His ministry did not go beyond this custom of the Jews, but the disciples recognized that after the resurrection He had shown Himself as Messiah, and therefore they were prepared for the inauguration of a new policy.

It is recorded that after the resurrection, He commanded them to preach to the Gentiles. In Matt. xxviii. 19, we read 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> In St. Luke xxiv. 46, 47 we are told more definitely that the preaching to the Gentiles was a fulfilment of what the Scriptures had foretold would happen when Messiah came: 'And He said to them, "Thus it is

<sup>1</sup> For the authenticity of this passage, see the note on ii. 38.

Joppa accompanied him. And on the morrow <sup>24</sup> they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends. And when <sup>25</sup> it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter raised him up, <sup>26</sup> saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day and that repentance unto remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." In Acts i. 8, the extension of the gospel is to begin after the gift of the Holy Spirit, 'Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and in Samaria and unto the end of the earth.' If the last quotation represents exactly the words of our Lord, it is easy to understand the disciples still hesitating. They had been told that they were to preach to all the world, but that they were to begin in Jerusalem and Judæa. They might quite reasonably expect some distinct sign before they were to make the further steps of going to Samaria and to the end of the earth. But it is possible that this text from Acts i. 8 does not contain the exact words of Christ but has been modified in accordance with the historical spread of Christianity gradually from Jerusalem outwards.

The real issue at stake was not whether Christians might preach to the Gentiles, but the subject of their

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and  
28 findeth many come together : and he said unto  
them, Ye yourselves know how that it is an  
unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join  
himself or come unto one of another nation ;  
and *yet* unto me hath God shewed that I should  
29 not call any man common or unclean : where-  
fore also I came without gainsaying, when I  
was sent for. I ask therefore with what intent

preaching. Jews, at any rate, outside Palestine, allowed Gentiles to attend the synagogue and hear the preaching. The real issue at stake in the case of Christian preaching was the status of non-Christians who accepted the teaching. If they were circumcised and undertook to keep the whole Law, then no Jew could make any objection. Such converts being duly installed as proselytes, might be accepted into fullest fellowship with Jewish Christians. But to admit a Gentile to inter dining without previous circumcision was a serious innovation. St. Peter's fear of entering into the house of Cornelius was lest he should be invited to dine, and it needed the express command of the vision to make him take this step. Christ had not apparently definitely said that circumcision might be omitted, and in spite of His clear commands to preach to all the nations it was only by slow experience that the disciples discovered that this would only be done by flinging open the doors and not demanding submission to the Jewish law. At first, even after the case of Peter and Cornelius had been

ye sent for me. And Cornelius said, Four **30**  
days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the  
ninth hour of prayer in my house ; and behold,  
a man stood before me in bright apparel, and **31**  
saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine  
alms are had in remembrance in the sight of  
God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto **32**  
thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter ; he  
lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by

condoned, there were probably many who thought that this was a special case authorized by St. Peter's vision. It is so obvious to us looking back on the history, that Christianity could never have expanded while it was bound by the fetters of Jewish legalism, that we find it difficult to realize how fervently the early Jewish Christians hoped to be able to preserve all that was dear to them in their ancestral customs at the same that they invited the Gentiles to join in. One of the hardest lessons the Jewish Christians had to learn was that there is no 'Chosen People' with God. It is one of the hardest lessons India has to learn : the high caste man may be distinguished from the low caste man by more cultured manners, but the age-long idea that his caste position indicates a higher spiritual stage is a delusion, as the emancipation of the depressed classes in showing. From such a national pride the Jewish Christians with difficulty extricated themselves. St. Paul, who did almost more than any one else to deliver Christianity from Jewish nationalism, right to the end of his life felt the



**33** the sea side. Forthwith therefore I sent to thee ; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have **34** been commanded thee of the Lord. And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

sense of wonder that Gentiles had been permitted to hear the news of the gospel and receive the same gift of the Holy Spirit as the Jews who of old time had hoped for the coming of Christ (Eph. i. 12-13).

3. **He saw in a vision openly.** Unlike an ordinary dream in which objects usually have a certain haziness or uncertainty about them, this vision appeared as clear and open as ordinary sight. So too, the word 'trance' used in verse 10 to describe St. Peter's condition when he saw his vision is not one that would be used to describe a dream in sleep. Although ordinary dreams probably almost always have a significance, if only we could analyse them correctly, these visions were of even greater and clearer significance as they did not take place in ordinary sleep. In both cases we are told that the vision came during prayer—Cornelius said (verse 30) 'I was keeping the hour of prayer in my house,' and St. Peter said (xi. 5) 'I was in the city of Joppa praying.'

4. **Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God.** This message of the angel to Cornelius is perhaps the clearest statement in the Bible about the position of those outside the Christian fold who are earnest seekers after God. For it must

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth **35** him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. The word which he sent unto the **36** children of Israel, preaching good tidings of

be remembered that Cornelius was a Gentile. The expression used of him ' one that feared God ' occurs frequently in the Acts, and it indicates those Gentiles who had been attracted by the Jewish religion and had accepted more or less of its teaching, including the unity of God and the moral teaching of the Old Testament, but refused to accept the ritual laws of the Old Testament. They were uncircumcised and were regarded by the Jews as Gentiles. Proselytes, on the other hand, were circumcised, accepted the whole Jewish Law, and were reckoned by the Jews as full members of the holy commonwealth of Israel. In some older Bible commentaries it is said that these ' God-fearers ' were regarded by the Jews as half-proselytes, were called ' Proselytes of the Gate,' and were bound to certain parts of the Law. This is a mistake, for it has been shown that the term ' Proselytes of the Gate ' was very much later, and that the ' God-fearers ' were in no sense regarded as Israelites. The Jews however encouraged such people to attend the synagogue, because they hoped to make proselytes of them. Cornelius then was a complete ' outsider ' from Israel, and he corresponds exactly to those Hindus or Mussalmans who have been influenced by Christianity so as to believe

**37** peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; *even* Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; **39** for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they

in one God and to try to follow the Christian moral law, but have not definitely broken with their former religions and become Christians by baptism. Whether they call God by some name such as Allah or Śiva, if they attribute to Him the character of God revealed by Christ, and if they are earnestly seeking Him in prayer, we cannot doubt that their prayers are accepted by God. We may speak of the blessing they receive as 'uncovenanted mercies,' for it is the Holy Spirit who is working within them, though they refuse to accept the blessings covenanted to us through the sacraments and through fellowship in the Church. We ought therefore to encourage such people in their devotions, praying that in time they may be led like Cornelius to seek God in the way that He has specially ordained in the fellowship of the Church, the Body of Christ.

11. **A great sheet.** The words should be translated

slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised 40 up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto 41 witnesses that were chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to 42 preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he which is ordained of God *to be* the Judge

‘a great sail’, for that is the meaning in late Greek, and it is a figure naturally suggested to one living at the sea-side.

19. **The Spirit said unto him.** We need not understand by this another vision or voice. St. Peter’s conscience told him that the meaning of the vision he had received was that he should not hesitate to go with these Gentiles. It was the Holy Spirit dwelling in his conscience which led him to this decision.

34-43. This speech of St. Peter’s bears out incidentally a number of statements recorded in the Gospels. It confirms the fact that our Lord’s work began in Galilee (verse 37), the fact of our Lord’s ministry of good works and healing (verse 38), and the fact that our Lord ate with the disciples after His resurrection (verse 41) which is elsewhere only recorded in Luke xxiv. 42, 43.

42. **The judge of quick and dead.** The future judgment of the world, with Christ as judge of the living and the dead, formed an important part of early Christian teaching, and has very rightly been

**43** of quick and dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

**44** While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

**45** And they of the circumcision which believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured

included in the Creeds. St. Paul at Athens said, 'He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained' (xvii. 31). Before Felix St. Paul 'reasoned of righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come' (xxiv. 25). This teaching was of course based on our Lord's parables of the end of the world and the final judgment. The idea is as old as the book of Daniel, where, in the same section that speaks of the coming of the Son of Man, we read, 'the judgment was set and the books were opened' (Dan. vii. 10). The importance of insisting on the return of Christ as judge must have been strongly felt by Jewish Christians who were following the principles laid down by Christ instead of the written Law of the Old Testament. Without a written Law they felt at first like a ship without an anchor, and feared falling away into lawless licence. But when they understood that Christ was their standard of life and conduct and that their lives would be reviewed by One of such pure motive and sinless character, they

out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they 46  
heard them speak with tongues, and magnify  
God. Then answered Peter, Can any man 47  
forbid the water, that these should not be  
baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost  
as well as we? And he commanded them to 48  
be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then  
prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Now the apostles and the brethren that 111  
were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles also had  
received the word of God. And when Peter 2  
was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of  
the circumcision contended with him, saying, 3

felt an incentive to righteousness far greater than had been provided by the threatenings and curses of the Law of Moses. 'The person who was to be God's agent in the future judgment and redemption was identified with Jesus Himself. It was no longer an ideal figure cloudy and abstract, for whom the Christian looked up to the night sky, but some one whom he knew, some One with all the inexpressible richness, the penetrant appeal of a Living Person. It was not only some deliverer he longed for, to adjust the wrongs of the world, but the Friend whose touch he had felt, for whom his orphaned heart cried out, without whom, having once known Him, he could never be happy again.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edwyn Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity*, p. 220.

Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and  
4 didst eat with them. But Peter began, and  
expounded *the matter* unto them in order  
5 saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying : and  
in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel  
descending, as it were a great sheet let down  
from heaven by four corners ; and it came even  
6 unto me ; upon the which when I had fastened  
mine eyes, I considered, and saw the fourfooted  
beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creep-  
7 ing things and fowls of the heaven. And I  
heard also a voice saying unto me, Rise, Peter ;  
8 kill and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord : for  
nothing common or unclean hath ever entered  
9 into my mouth. But a voice answered the  
second time out of heaven, What God hath  
10 cleansed, make not thou common. And this  
was done thrice : and all were drawn up again  
11 into heaven. And behold, forthwith three men  
stood before the house in which we were,

18. **God has granted repentance unto life.** These words are important as showing us God's part in our repentance. Since repentance is the turning of a man towards God, we are apt to think of it as entirely man's work. But indeed we cannot repent without God's help. To the end of his days St. Augustine thought of his own conversion, not as something he himself had done, but God's gift to him.



having been sent from Cæsarea unto me. And **12** the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction. And these six brethren also accompanied me; and we entered into the man's house: and he told us how he had seen **13** the angel standing in his house, and saying Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee **14** words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house. And as I began to speak, the **15** Holy Ghost fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of **16** the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. If then God gave unto **17** them the like gift as *he did* also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God? And when **18** they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.

Some one said one day to Rabi'a the Islamic mystic, 'I have committed many sins; if I turn in penitence towards God, will He turn in mercy towards me?' 'Nay,' she replied, 'but if He shall turn towards thee, thou wilt turn towards Him.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. A. Nicholson, *Mystics of Islam*, p. 31.

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only  
20 to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also,  
21 preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number  
22 that believed turned unto the Lord. And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem and they sent

19-26. The opening words of the section carry us back to viii. 1, which had recorded the scattering of the Christians after the martyrdom of St. Stephen. But it is not clear whether the events told here happened before or after the conversion of Cornelius. Probably, at any rate, the news of Cornelius' conversion reached Jerusalem before the news of the events at Antioch, so that, as far as the authorities in Jerusalem were concerned, Cornelius was the first instance of a Gentile convert. The Christians scattered as far as the coast-lands to the north of Mt. Carmel, called Phœnicia, of which the chief towns were the sea-ports of Tyre and Sidon. From there some took ship to the island of Cyprus, and others northwards as far as the third greatest city of the Empire, Antioch in Syria. Wherever the Christians went they proclaimed the gospel to their fellow-Jews.

forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when<sup>23</sup> he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the<sup>24</sup> Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. And he went forth<sup>25</sup>

But some of the broader-minded Jews of the Dispersion, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, preached in Antioch to Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> Among those Gentiles no doubt some had already been attracted by Judaism and might have been described by Jews as 'such as feared God', but there is no reason to suppose that the Cypriote and Cyrenian Christians restricted their preaching to 'God-fearing' Gentiles. There is no suggestion, when St. Paul later on turned from the Jews to preach to Gentiles, that he was the first to preach to Gentiles. The effect of the preaching of the Christians in Antioch was that many, including no doubt both Jews and Gentiles, believed. Although baptism is not mentioned, there can be no doubt that they were baptized. For it was the news that Gentiles were being received into the Church which

<sup>1</sup> R. V. 'Greeks,' R. V. margin 'Grecian Jews,' indicate a difference of reading in the original. The latter has the stronger manuscript evidence, but the sense demands the meaning 'Greeks who had not accepted Judaism.' If the word 'hellenistas' which R. V. margin follows is correct, we must assume that St. Luke was using it in the sense of 'Greeks' and not as 'Greek-speaking Jews,' although we have no other evidence for such a usage.

26 to Tarsus to seek for Saul : and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people ; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

induced the Christians in Jerusalem to send Barnabas as a delegate to enquire into the matter. He was no doubt given a free hand to enquire whether these admissions of Gentiles had or had not been authorized by visible marks of God's approval as in the case of Cornelius. It was fortunate that Barnabas was chosen, for being a man inspired by the Holy Spirit, that is, a man of deep spirituality, he was able to discern the workings of the Holy Spirit in the new converts. Whether there were outward signs like speaking with tongues we are not told ; but Barnabas was able to judge the presence of the Spirit by the life and conduct of the converts. He was therefore able to encourage the converts, and the whole Christian body ; and the movement among the Gentiles went forward. Barnabas then thought that Saul would be the right man to engage in the new movement, and fetched him for that purpose from Tarsus to Antioch. For a year they worked together in Antioch, and for the first time the movement attracted general attention and the disciples received from their Gentile neighbours the name ' Christians ', or partizans of Christ.

Now in these days there came down prophets 27

27-30. The opening of this section is one of the few places where the Bezan text very probably has the original text of the Acts. It reads as follows: 'Now in those days there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch, and there was much rejoicing. And while we were gathered together, one of them named Agabus spoke, signifying by the Spirit . . .' The main reason for believing that this is the correct text, although the number of manuscripts supporting it is small, is that we can easily understand its omission by scribes who felt that rejoicing was incongruous with a prediction of famine, and who could not understand the sudden appearance of the first personal pronoun 'we'. On the other hand, it is equally hard to understand why the words should have been inserted later, if not original. Accepting the words as original we learn that the arrival of the prophets—that is, men of spiritual power to proclaim the gospel—caused great joy among the Christians. Evidently these prophets, like Barnabas, encouraged the movement among the Gentiles, unlike the men who came from Judæa at a slightly later time (xv. 1) and only found fault. One of the prophets named Agabus was inspired to declare a coming famine throughout the world. St. Luke tells us that this actually happened in the reign of Claudius. Other historians do not speak of one famine throughout the Roman Empire, but of a number of local famines in the course of the reign of Claudius (A. D. 41-54). Probably St. Luke took this as sufficiently fulfilling the

28 from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and

prophecy. The actual famine in Palestine was somewhere between A.D. 45 and 48 and the prophecy may have been about A.D. 43 or 44. If famines had been reported from other parts of the world, the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem may have begun to wonder how they would fare if the famine reached Jerusalem. The sudden inspiration of Agabus was to speak of the threatened famine when he was staying in the great and wealthy city of Antioch, and to suggest the new idea that the Gentile Christians should show their fellowship with the mother Church of Jerusalem by a gift in time of need. The new Christians were so filled with the sense of fellowship that they readily took the hint and never for a moment said 'But we are Greeks and they are Jews.' Nothing could have shown more clearly that they were truly members of the same Church than their eagerness to help their 'brethren' in distress, brethren in Christ though not brethren by birth. We can imagine that their exhibition of fellowship caused mutual congratulations and added to the joy first felt at the arrival of the prophets. One further point of importance arises from the adoption of the Bezan reading. The word 'we' indicates that the author himself, i. e. St. Luke, was present. Apart from this passage, there is no 'we' until xvi. 10 when St. Paul and his party sailed from Troas for Macedonia. As St. Paul was only passing through Troas there can scarcely have been time for him on that occasion to convert

signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which

St. Luke and adopt him as a member of the company. We must assume that St. Luke had become a Christian before he met St. Paul at Troas, and it is quite likely that he was living in Antioch earlier on and there embraced Christianity. A tradition is preserved by Eusebius (*Ecc. Hist.* iii. 4) and Jerome (preface to St. Luke's Gospel in the Vulgate) that St. Luke was a native of Antioch. Ramsay thinks that St. Luke's local knowledge of Macedonia stamps him of Macedonian origin, but even so he may well have lived for a time in Antioch. As there is no suggestion in Acts (apart from the Bezan text here) that St. Luke had anything to do with Antioch, it is quite likely that Eusebius and Jerome got their information from some local tradition.

30. This visit to Jerusalem is the second time according to Acts, that St. Paul visited Jerusalem, the previous occasion being that mentioned in ix. 26-30. A third visit is recorded in Acts xv when he went up to Jerusalem to the Council which settled the question of the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian Church. In the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul mentions two visits to Jerusalem, and there has been great discussion among scholars as to which of the visits recorded in Acts correspond to the two mentioned in Galatians. There can be little doubt that the first visit in Acts corresponds with the first visit recorded in Galatians (i. 18). It is true that there are some difficulties even in that identification,



29 came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his

though probably not so great as to invalidate it (see note on ix. 19-31). With regard to the second visit recorded in Gal. ii. 1-10 there is not the same certainty, many scholars identifying it with the third visit of Acts xv instead of the second visit of Acts xi. 30. It would appear from Galatians that St. Paul is relating all the occasions when he visited Jerusalem, so that it would be impossible for him to have omitted the visit recorded in Acts xi. 30. And though the suggestion has been made that the other apostles may have been absent from Jerusalem at the time, so that St. Paul did not think it necessary to mention the visit, yet there still remain great difficulties in the way of identifying the visit of Gal. ii. 1-10 with that of Acts xv. In the former, there was a private conversation between St. Paul and those 'who were of repute' including James, Peter and John; in the latter it was a public meeting. In the former the result was a friendly agreement that Paul and Barnabas should preach to the Gentiles and the others to Jews; in the latter there was a formal decision that circumcision was not necessary for Gentile converts, but certain requirements were embodied in a formal epistle. In both cases the question of circumcision came up, in Gal. ii in the matter of the circumcision of Titus, and in Acts xv as the sole question of discussion. It is not clear from Galatians whether St. Paul means that he definitely refused to circumcise Titus, or that he circumcised him as a

ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa: which also 30

concession and not by compulsion. These differences between Gal. ii and Acts xv suggest that we are reading accounts of two stages in the same controversy: in Gal. ii. St. Paul is questioned privately about his preaching to the Gentiles in general; in Acts xv one aspect of that preaching, the freedom of Gentile Christians from subjection to the law of circumcision, has become a burning question which must be settled by the whole body of Christians.

We feel free therefore to identify Gal. ii with Acts xi. 30; and this the more readily because St. Paul in Gal. ii says the visit was by revelation, which agrees with what St. Luke tells us in Acts xi. 28 that the famine relief was prepared in consequence of the prophesying of Agabus, and because the conclusion of the account in Gal. ii is a request to St. Paul to remember the poor, which he said he was most zealous to do, which gains point from Acts xi. 30 according to which a charitable gift for the poor had been the object of his visit.

It should be mentioned that there is a slight chronological difficulty in the identification here suggested. The notes of time in Galatians seems to say that this visit took place seventeen years after St. Paul's conversion. Josephus (*Ant.* 20. 5. 2) mentions a famine in Palestine about A.D. 45-48. Even if the relief was sent quite at the end of this period, say A.D. 47-48, it would throw St. Paul's conversion back as early as A.D. 30 or possibly A.D. 31 which is earlier

they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

than we should have expected. There are two possible ways out of the difficulty: either the period 'three years' and 'fourteen years' in Gal. i. 18; ii. 1 mean really 'two years and a fraction', and 'thirteen years and a fraction', thus totalling, say, fifteen and a half years; or else the fourteen years is to be reckoned from St. Paul's conversion and not from the former visit to Jerusalem.

If we may assume the identity of Gal. ii. 1-10 with Acts xi. 30 we learn that Barnabas and Saul not only handed over the gift of money to the elders at Jerusalem, but they also had an opportunity of a short conversation with the apostles, Peter and John, and with James the brother of the Lord. In the course of this conversation they related something of the work among the Gentiles in Antioch, and St. Paul may also have referred to his work in Arabia and Tarsus. The question also came up about the circumcision of Titus. It will be noticed that Titus is never mentioned in the Acts, though it is clear from St. Paul's epistles that he played an important part. It may be that Titus was St. Luke's brother (cf. 2 Cor. viii. 16-18, xii. 18). Now it has been mentioned that, according to the Bezan text, the author of the Acts, that is, St. Luke, first appears on the scene at Antioch in Acts xi. 28. Is it merely a coincidence that Titus first appears in the visit to Jerusalem which we are inclined to identify with that of Acts xi. 30?

The death of Herod took place in A.D. 44. It is

Now about that time Herod the king put<sup>121</sup> forth his hands to afflict certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with<sup>2</sup> the sword. And when he saw that it pleased<sup>3</sup> the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And *those* were the days of unleavened bread. And when he had taken him, he put him in<sup>4</sup> prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people.

quite likely that the prophecy of Agabus was delivered before that date, although the fulfilment of the prophecy and the sending of the relief must have taken place after Herod's death. St. Luke therefore in chapter xii goes back to describe Herod's death and the events leading up to it, and then in xii. 25 again mentions the relief brought to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul.

1-19. Herod Agrippa I was grandson of Herod the Great, and by favour of the Emperors advanced in power until the whole of Palestine was under his control. First the Emperor Caius Caligula in A.D. 37 gave him the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias (see Luke iii. 1) with the title of king, and three years later Galilee and Peraea. Agrippa was largely instrumental in making Claudius Emperor in succession to Caius, and in return for this Claudius gave him Judæa also in A.D. 41. Up till that time he had remained in Rome, but on being made king of Judæa he came into his

5 Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but  
prayer was made earnestly of the church unto  
6 God for him. And when Herod was about to  
bring him forth, the same night Peter was  
sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two  
chains: and guards before the door kept the

kingdom and set himself, by careful fulfilment of the Pharisaic law, to win the favour of the Jews. The persecution of the Christians was part of this policy of winning the favour of the Jews. First he executed St. James the son of Zebedee, and finding that this was successful, he proceeded to arrest St. Peter. The arrest was made at Passover time, presumably in the same year A.D. 44 in which Herod died; and for fear of trouble during the Feast, Herod kept him for the time in prison. The story of St. Peter's release from prison bears a close resemblance to the story of Sadhu Sundar Singh's escape from a well in Tibet. The following is the account given by Mrs. Parker.<sup>1</sup> 'He was arrested and arraigned before the head Lama on the charge of entering the country and preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was found guilty, and amidst a crowd of evil-disposed persons he was led away to the place of execution. The two favourite forms of capital punishment are being sewn up in a wet yak skin and put out in the sun until death ends the torment, or being cast in the depth of a dry well, the top being firmly fastened over the head of the culprit.

<sup>1</sup> *Sadhu Sundar Singh*, pp. 64ff, quoted by Streeter and Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, p. 30.

prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord<sup>7</sup> stood by him, and a light shined in the cell : and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains

The latter was chosen for the Sadhu. Arrived at the place he was stripped of his clothes and cast into the dark depths of this ghastly charnel-house with such violence that his right arm was injured. Many others had gone down this same well before him, never to return, and he alighted on a mass of human bones and rotting flesh. Any death seemed preferable to this. Wherever he laid his hands they met putrid flesh, while the odour almost poisoned him. In the words of his Saviour he cried, " Why hast thou forsaken me ? " . Day passed into night, making no change in the darkness of this awful place and bringing no relief by sleep. Without food or even water the hours grew into days and Sundar felt he could not last much longer. On the third night, just when he had been crying to God in prayer, he heard a grating sound overhead. Some one was opening the locked lid of his dismal prison. He heard the key turned and the rattle of the iron covering as it was drawn away. Then a voice reached him from the top of the well, telling him to take hold of the rope that was being let down for his rescue. As the rope reached him he grasped it with all his remaining strength, and was strongly but gently pulled up from the evil place into the fresh air above. Arrived at the top of the well the lid was drawn over again and locked. When he

8 fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed ; and he wist not that it was true which was done by

looked round, his deliverer was nowhere to be seen, but the pain in his arm was gone and the clear air filled him with new life. All that the Sadhu felt able to do was to praise God for His wonderful deliverance, and when morning came he struggled back to the town, where he rested in the serai until he was able to start preaching again. His return to the city and his old work was cause for a great commotion. The news was quickly taken to the Lama that the man they all thought dead was well and preaching again. The Sadhu was again arrested and brought to the judgment seat of the Lama, and being questioned as to what had happened, he told the story of his marvellous escape. The Lama was greatly angered, declaring that some one must have secured the key and gone to his rescue ; but when search was made for the key and it was found on his own girdle, he was speechless with amazement and fear. He then ordered Sundar to leave the city and get away as far as possible, lest his powerful God should bring some untold disaster upon himself and his people.' Now although this story is in our own time, its interpretation is as difficult as the story of St. Peter's escape. It is possible that both events were non-miraculous,



the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And **10** when they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and straightway the angel departed from him. And when **11** Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had **12**

that some well-disposed person acted as rescuer. But the difficulty in the way of a rescue in either case suggests that both were actually miraculous interventions of God. One striking difference between the two accounts is the opinion of the prisoner at the time. St. Peter thought it was all a vision until he found himself safe and sound. The Sadhu thought the rescuer was a man until he disappeared. Another point of great importance to be noticed is that earnest prayer was being offered by the Christians on behalf of St. Peter (xii. 5, 12).

10. After the words 'they went out' the Bezan text adds 'and descended the seven steps.' This may be the original text which has been accidentally omitted, or it may be an addition by some one who knew the prison.

12. John, whose surname was Mark. He was

considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together  
13 and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer,  
14 named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate.  
15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so.  
16 And they said, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened,

probably at home at the time, as we learn in verse 25 that shortly afterwards he went to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul. We doubtless owe to him this graphic narrative.

15. **It is his angel.** In this passage we cannot think of the angel in the ordinary sense as one of the heavenly host attending on the wants of God and man. When the maid heard St. Peter's voice, and told the rest of the company, they knew or thought they knew that the real Peter was in prison, and said that the appearance was his angel. Many commentators have supposed they meant a guardian angel, one of the heavenly host sent to look after him. If so, why should the angel speak with the voice of the man? A more probable view was put forward by J. H. Moulton<sup>1</sup> that the Jews thought of men as having

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Theological Studies*, iii. p. 514.

they saw him, and were amazed. But he, <sup>17</sup>beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place. Now as soon as it <sup>18</sup>was day, there was no small stir among the

a representative in the heavens in the presence of God, growing and developing with the growth of the man on earth. Our Lord expressed approval of this theory (Matt. xviii. 10) when He said that the angels of little children are always in the presence of God ; i.e. the representative of the little child, sharing in its innocence, is close to the presence of God, but when the child falls into sin the representative angel must correspondingly lose its privilege only to be regained when the child by stern conflict has slain the primal enemy. Similar also is the idea of representative angels of Churches which we find in the Revelation. The rebuke for the sins of the Church is addressed to the angel. Moulton gave reasons for thinking that this idea of representative angels was borrowed by the Jews from Zoroastrianism. According to the Parsis man was made up of body, life, soul, form and 'fravashi'. The 'fravashi' is the part of man which is in the presence of Ahura (God). At death the body returns to the earth, the life to the wind, the form to the sun, while the soul unites with the 'fravashi' and so attains immortality. If the Jews had adopted some

19 soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and tarried there.

20 Now he was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: and they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the

such doctrine as this, using the word 'angel' for 'fravashi' we can readily understand why the disciples, on being told that St. Peter's voice was heard outside the door, said it was his angel.

20-23. Herod Agrippa I had a quarrel with the Phœnician cities of Tyre and Sidon, and although he had no jurisdiction over them he was able to bring them to subjection by cutting off their corn supplies from Galilee. Having therefore bribed Blastus, Agrippa's chamberlain, they came to seek reconciliation. Agrippa desired to make a great impression on them, and dressed himself in gorgeous apparel and delivered an oration. To flatter him they acclaimed him as a god. The custom of deifying rulers had been growing.<sup>1</sup> As early as 29 B.C. Augustus had allowed temples to be built in his honour at Pergamum

<sup>1</sup> See Lattey: *Texts illustrating Ancient Ruler-worship*, published by S.P.C.K.

king's country. And upon a set day Herod<sup>21</sup> arrayed himself in royal apparel, and sat on the throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people shouted, *saying*, The voice of<sup>22</sup> a God, and not of a man. And immediately<sup>23</sup> an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

in Asia and at Nicomedia in Bithynia. Herod the Great had built temples to Augustus in Samaria and in Cæsarea Philippi; and in Cæsarea itself (where the death of Agrippa took place) were statues of Cæsar Augustus and Rome and a temple of Cæsar. It was only following this precedent that Agrippa allowed himself to be deified. Josephus gives an account of his terrible end closely resembling St. Luke's account and makes Agrippa attribute to Fate the punishment which St. Luke regards as a judgment of God: 'On the second day of the shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, of a wonderful contexture, and came into the theatre early in the morning. There the silver, lit up by the first beating of the sun's rays upon it, shone forth marvellously, and by its flashing cast a fear and terror upon those who gazed at him. And straightway his flatterers cried out, one from one place and another from another, not for his good, addressing him as a god; and they added, "Deal kindly with us; if hitherto we have revered thee as a man, yet henceforth we confess thee superior to mortal nature." The king did not rebuke them, nor

- 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.  
25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

did he reject their impious flattery. . . . A great pain arose in his belly, violent from the outset. Looking therefore upon his friends he said, "I, your god, am already bidden depart this life, for so fate forthwith confutes the lying words even now spoken of me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am already being led forth to die." The flatterers were overjoyed at the death of Agrippa: a riot followed in Cæsarea, and insults were heaped on the name of Agrippa and his children. The experiment of having a king over Palestine was such a pronounced failure that the whole district was in future governed by a Roman Procurator.

25. The evidence of the manuscripts shows that the earliest text of which we have knowledge was, 'And Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem,' whereas the reading usually adopted 'from Jerusalem' is a later emendation. It is difficult to make any sense of the reading 'to Jerusalem', because for St. Paul at any rate a journey to Jerusalem could hardly be called a return. Bartlet in his commentary in the Century Bible suggests that the original text did not contain the words 'to Jerusalem' or 'from Jerusalem'. It is easy to imagine that someone wrote the words 'to Jerusalem' in the margin of his manuscript, as a reference to this visit of Paul and

Now there were at Antioch, in the church **131**  
that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Barnabas,

Barnabas to Jerusalem, and that some unintelligent scribe copied the words into the text. A suggestion of a similar interpolation has been made in the note on ix. 19-31.

THE EVANGELIZATION OF GALATIA, xiii. 1-xvi. 5

1-3. St. Luke has previously indicated the way the gospel spread naturally by Christians travelling about their ordinary business, and telling the news to their friends. The amount of travelling that was possible in those days, and its security, is illustrated by the fact that one Phrygian merchant made seventy-two voyages to Rome in the course of his life. But chapter xiii opens a new era in the spread of the gospel, when missionaries went out with the express object of evangelization. It is impossible to say which of the two methods was the more fruitful. Both were necessary. The one or two missionaries could not personally teach the thousands who became disciples of Christ, but the efforts of the missionaries built up an organization, a Church, in which the new disciples could find a home. Christianity is not merely the relation of the individual to Christ, but a society of individuals united in Him. The critics who desire only the conversion of individuals, and object to the 'proselytising' methods of modern missions, i.e. gathering converts into a Christian society, fail to see one of the essential marks of Christianity. When Christianity began to be a



and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of

strong force within the Roman Empire it was regarded by the Gentiles as 'The Third Race', the other two races being the Greeks and the Jews. Christianity in India must become a 'Third Race', distinct from Hinduism and Islam, a new caste, not intended like the castes of Hinduism to exclude others, but destined to grow until it embraces in one all inclusive body the whole population of the land.

Five names of outstanding personalities at Antioch are given and they are distinguished as prophets and teachers. Teachers were abundant among the Jews, but prophets, men who had a message from God for their fellow-men, had ceased to exist for three centuries or more ever since Judaism became a book-religion. The advent of Christianity was heralded by a prophet, John the Baptist, and prophets have been the mark of the Christian Church ever since. It has been the constant endeavour of the Church to choose as its elders, or executive officers, men endued with such spiritual powers. The feeling of the Church has always been against the existence of a ruling class appointed for any other reason than their spiritual power; and when from time to time such deadness has crept over the Church as to allow mere place-seekers or politicians to usurp the ministry, the Spirit indwelling the Church has manifested His power outside the ordered ministry. Of the five men mentioned here, Barnabas is placed first. Not only was he the official delegate from Jerusalem, but his

Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy

spiritual power won him the first place. Of Symeon Niger, Lucius and Manaen, we know nothing. St. Luke places Saul last, a position of emphasis, as if to say that he was the latest arrival in Antioch, as yet unknown, but destined to occupy the foremost position. While these five were waiting upon God, a message came from Him to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a special work. It is worth careful note that God's will is revealed to those who wait on Him in prayer. Fasting was enjoined on the Jews only on one day in the year, the Day of Atonement. But from ancient times fasting had been regarded as a sign of mourning and therefore suitable as a religious exercise when humbling oneself before God, as the Ninevites in the story of Jonah. It had become a custom of the Pharisees to fast twice in the week. Like all asceticism fasting has its uses and abuses. It is necessary under certain circumstances as an offset against depending too much upon the luxuries of life. Some people find that to put the body under the strain of fasting quickens the higher faculties and prevents them being dragged down by the desires of the body. On the other hand, there is a danger, well known in the East, of regarding fasting as in itself a meritorious act. It was of fasting of this kind that our Lord spoke when He said, 'The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day' (Mark ii. 20). He meant that so long as we are living the true Christian life in

Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

His presence our prevailing note will be one of joy, but when dark days of unspirituality come Christians will depend upon the supposed merit to be got from ascetic practices. Our Lord by His own great fast showed that fasting might be a useful discipline under certain circumstances. We can be sure that He would not approve of a fast that is in obedience to mere regulations, or of a fast that engenders pride as if it was a spiritual achievement. The fast at Antioch before the separation of Barnabas and Saul was doubtless the spontaneous expression of a desire to lay aside thought of everything else in order to devote their thoughts entirely to seeking the will of God. The will of God then revealed was one which human judgment would scarcely have suggested. Natural prudence would have raised the objection that the Church of Antioch would lose by the departure of Barnabas and Saul. Natural prudence in the same way might make a modern Church hesitate to send out its best leaders to another part of India to work under the National Missionary Society. But the spiritual life does not follow the rules of ordinary book-keeping. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' The more we spend spiritually the more we have to spend.

There has been much discussion about the laying on of hands mentioned in verse 3, whether it corresponds to what we call 'ordination' for life, or whether it was a solemn setting apart for a particular journey. In either case, but especially in the former, the

Then, when they had fasted and prayed and<sup>3</sup> laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

difficulty has been that the leaders in Antioch were not apostles. How then could 'apostolic succession' be transmitted through them? The difficulty only arises through misunderstanding the meaning and purpose of apostolic succession. The object of such succession is to maintain the unity of the Church. In this case the apostles at Jerusalem had already committed the care of the Church of Antioch to Barnabas; so they would approve of what Barnabas and the Church of Antioch did. Barnabas in setting out, and the whole Church of Antioch in blessing his journey, would undoubtedly therefore have the support of the mother Church in Jerusalem. The laying on of hands indicated that the whole Church participated in the missionary endeavour. When John Wesley consecrated bishops for America, his action at first sight might appear to be similar. But in reality, it was not. He had no commission of that sort from the Church as a whole, and the Church did not approve of the authority which he gave. His act was an act of schism, whereas that of the leaders of Antioch was not. Instead of thinking in terms of 'apostolic succession' it is better to think in terms of 'a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body.'<sup>1</sup> This principle will help us in

<sup>1</sup> Lambeth Conference, 1920, Resolution vi.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost,  
went down to Seleucia ; and from thence they  
5 sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at  
Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in  
the synagogues of the Jews : and they had also

the plans to be adopted in the event of re-union between the Church of the Province of India, Burma and Ceylon and the United Church of South India. What we have to insist upon is not the mere act of re-ordination, laying on of hands afresh, but in some form or other the approval of the Church as a whole of the new ministry. If a single bishop consecrated a Congregational or Baptist minister as a bishop, the action might meet with general disapproval, and the newly consecrated bishop might be disowned by the Church at large. In spite of apostolic succession, unity of the Church would not have been preserved. There can be no doubt that in the ordinary course of events the maintenance of apostolic succession works in the direction of unity. But the maintenance of unity (including unity of doctrine) is the main thing, and in exceptional circumstances, as for instance in the reunion of separated bodies, some other means may more effectually attain that object.

4-12. The journey that was to be of such great moment in the history began on a small scale. The party determined to visit the island of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas. We gather that the Holy Spirit had not indicated the full extent of the journey, but only led the missionaries on step by step. For

John as their attendant. And when they had<sup>6</sup> gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; which was<sup>7</sup> with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so<sup>8</sup> is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the

John Mark who was with Paul and Barnabas during the work in Cyprus seems not to have approved of the plans for extending the work on the mainland, and as soon as they landed there he left the party and took the next boat home again. Although St. Paul looked on this departure of St. Mark as a desertion (xv. 38), the explanation probably is that St. Mark was not convinced that it was the Spirit's call to work in so extended a field. Of all the work in Cyprus only one incident is recorded. Starting from Salamis they worked westwards across the island, probably choosing the places where the larger number of Jews were to be found, and announcing to them the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. The one incident which had attracted St. Luke's attention, which he thought worthy of being recorded, was when St. Paul came face to face with a high Roman official and at the same time with a professor of magic. St. Luke's accuracy in historical detail is to be noticed in speaking of this official as 'Proconsul', the correct title

9 faith. But Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, fastened his eyes on  
10 him, and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to  
11 pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

for the head of a province under the Roman Senate. This we know to have been the status of Cyprus at that time. Earlier on it had been a province under the Emperor, and the head then would have been a 'Legate' or 'Proprætor'. The name of the magician is however rather a difficulty, for St. Luke says that 'Elymas the sorcerer,' is a translation of the man's other name 'Bar-jesus.' The form and derivation of the name Elymas are unknown. Probably both names 'Bar-jesus' and 'Elymas' have been corrupted in transmission, and the originals were respectively the Aramaic and Greek forms of the same name. St. Paul himself had two names, the Hebrew or Aramaic 'Shā'ul' and the Greek 'Paulos.' From this place onwards Acts calls him by the latter name, by which of course he would always be known amongst Greek-speaking people. The magician Elymas was attached to the household of the proconsul,



Then the proconsul, when he saw what was **12** done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Now Paul and his company set sail from **13**

who, like other Europeans of the period, was dissatisfied with the old Roman or Greek religions and was seeking wisdom and salvation in oriental religions or superstitions. Elymas was perturbed at hearing the gospel preached by the Christian apostles, recognizing it as a dangerous rival to the particular system by which he earned his living. When St. Luke says that Elymas tried to turn aside the proconsul from the faith, he only means that Elymas tried to dissuade the proconsul from listening to the new teaching. Even in verse 12 where we read that the proconsul 'believed' we need not suppose that he was actually converted and became a Christian. He was impressed and astonished at the power working in Christianity, and believed that the fate of Elymas was an exhibition of that power. If so prominent a Roman official had actually accepted Christianity as his own religion there would probably have been more explicit mention of the fact.

13, 14. Leaving Cyprus the missionaries sailed to Pamphylia on the southern coast of what is now Asia Minor. From Perga in Pamphylia St. Mark left them. Whether any preaching was done at Perga we are not told. St. Luke hastens on with the story bringing us at once to the scene of St. Paul at Antioch, and we are probably meant to understand that no

Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia :  
and John departed from them and returned to  
14 Jerusalem. But they, passing through from

preaching was done on the course of that hundred mile journey into the hilly country. This Antioch was on the borders of the old district of Pisidia, and is here called Pisidian Antioch to distinguish it from the great Antioch in Syria from which the apostles had started their journey. In the course of the narrative we come across a good many names of the old districts, like Pisidia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Mysia, for these names were still in popular use although the Romans had divided the country into the much larger Provinces of Pamphylia, Galatia, Asia, Bithynia, etc. The towns which St. Paul visited in chapters xiii and xiv belonged partly to Phrygia and partly to Lycaonia but were all in the southern part of the Roman Province of Galatia, so that in sending a letter to these towns St. Paul addressed it to the Churches of Galatia. This fact was not known till the researches in Asia Minor by Sir William Ramsay,<sup>1</sup> before which it was supposed that St. Paul visited the northern district from which the Province of Galatia got its name, and that Gal. was written to towns like Ancyra and Tavium in the northern district. In Gal. iv. 13, St. Paul says, 'Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you the first time.' This statement seems to indicate

<sup>1</sup> See his *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* and *Historical Commentary on Galatians*.

Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the **15** law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. And Paul stood up, and beckoning **16** with the hand said,

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken. The God of this people Israel chose **17** our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm led he them forth out of it. And **18** for about the time of forty years suffered he

that his journey to the hills was on account of illness, and it is natural to identify this illness with the 'stake in the flesh' of which he speaks in another place (2 Cor. xii. 7). Ramsay has made the conjecture that St. Paul got malaria and hastened up to the hills for that reason. In Gal. iv. 14 St. Paul goes on to say, 'That which was a temptation to you in my flesh ye despised not nor rejected.' If he had not recovered from the fever when he reached Antioch, and perhaps had a fit of ague while he was actually preaching to the people, these words would be amply explained.

14-43. We have here an account of St. Paul's preaching in the synagogue at Antioch. It is not clear whether the incident occurred on the first sabbath after the arrival of the missionaries, as it

19 their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave *them* their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty 20 years: and after these things he gave *them* 21 judges until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years.

depends upon the punctuation of verse 14. It should be remembered that the oldest manuscripts have no marks of punctuation. Perhaps we ought to allow more than one week for the spread throughout the city of the news of the Pauline teaching. Anyhow, on the sabbath in question, after the reading from the Law and from the Prophets, which constituted the most important part of the synagogue service, Paul and Barnabas were invited to speak. In the synagogue any Jew might preach if invited to do so. As St. Luke was not present on this occasion his information about the sermon must have come from St. Paul himself. The short summary we have represents the sort of thing that St. Paul often preached to Jewish congregations, and particularly that type of sermon which he preached early in his missionary career. He began by a summary of part of the Old Testament history. This may have been a familiar style of sermon, as St. Stephen used it for a very different purpose. St. Paul's speech only carried the history as far as David, the first ideal king,

And when he had removed him, he raised up **22** David to be their king ; to whom also he bare witness, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will. Of this man's seed hath God **23** according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus ; when John had first preached **24** before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was **25** fulfilling his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am? I am not *he*. But behold, there cometh one after me, the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose.

from whose seed the prophets had foretold that the future ideal king, the Messiah, would come. In verse 23, St. Paul applies to Jesus the title 'Saviour', thinking perhaps of the Judges who were described as 'Saviours' of Israel. The name was also applied to Jesus by the angel that announced His birth to the shepherds (Luke ii. 11), and by St. Peter in his speech before the sanhedrin (Acts v. 31). Apart from these passages the title 'Saviour' is only given to Christ in the later books of the New Testament. There may have been delay in adopting the title in Gentile Christian communities as it was commonly applied to pagan deities and the deities of the Mystery Religions. As evidence that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament St. Paul quoted the testimony of St. John the Baptist. It is probable

26 Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham,  
and those among you that fear God, to us is  
27 the word of this salvation sent forth. For  
they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers,  
because they knew him not, nor the voices of  
the prophets which are read every sabbath,  
28 fulfilled *them* by condemning *him*. And though  
they found no cause of death *in him*, yet asked  
29 they of Pilate that he should be slain. And  
when they had fulfilled all things that were  
written of him, they took him down from the

that the Baptist's life and teaching was widely known in Jewish circles. In verse 26 St. Paul announced that the salvation through Jesus was intended for all present, both Jews and God-fearers. He then described shortly the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The statement 'they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb' was inserted to emphasize His real death and burial, and does not contradict the statement of the gospel that this act of mercy was performed by Joseph of Arimathea. For the amazing fact of the resurrection St. Paul quoted prophecies from the Old Testament (Ps. ii. 7, Isa. lv. 3, Ps. xvi. 10). In verses 38, 39, St. Paul proclaimed through Jesus the remission of sins. The need of forgiveness of sins was felt by the Jews and the elaborate system of sacrifices was intended to attain that end. To the Gentiles, however, the idea was strange. They sought enlightenment of their

tree, and laid him in a tomb. But God raised 30  
him from the dead : and he was seen for many 31  
days of them that came up with him from  
Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his wit-  
nesses unto the people. And we bring you 32  
good tidings of the promise made unto the  
fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same 33  
unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus ;  
as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou  
art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.  
And as concerning that he raised him up from 34  
the dead, now no more to return to corruption,  
he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you

ignorance, but were not weighed down by their moral offences. One of the greatest authorities on the Greek Mystery Religions says, ' the terrible earnestness of the (Christian) preaching of guilt and atonement was lacking in Hellenism.' <sup>1</sup> The Greek, like the Hindu, needed to be convinced of the burden of sin before he looked for salvation from sin. It is not the place in a commentary on Acts to go into a discussion of the great doctrine set forth by St. Paul (briefly here in verse 39, and fully in the epistles to the Galatians and Romans) that we cannot set ourselves in the right before God by means of our good works, but that we can be set right by God if we fix our faith in Jesus Christ. This doctrine may be difficult to express in words, but it is easy to be

<sup>1</sup> Reitzenstein, *Poimandres*, p. 180 note.



**35** the holy and sure *blessings* of David. Because he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou wilt not  
**36** give thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:  
**37** but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore,  
**38** brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every  
**39** one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the

understood in practice. The sinner knows he has no good works to plead before God; and the knowledge that God is running out to meet him, and asks nothing further than that the sinner should fix his faith in Jesus, lifts him from despair into salvation. St. Paul saw that Christianity provided this thing that the legal system of Judaism had tried to provide in vain. The insufficiency of the Law as a means of attaining righteousness was already being felt by some of the Jews. It is probable that, before the time of St. Paul, Jews had begun to discuss the question of how we could be set right before God. Two Jewish works, written shortly after St. Paul's time, show signs of the controversy, the Apocalypse of Baruch li maintains that salvation is through the works of the Law, but 4 Ezra viii. 32-36 (the 2 Esdras of our Bibles) conceives of God's compassion somehow reaching out

law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that **40**  
come upon *you*, which is spoken in the prophets ;

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and **41**  
perish ;

For I work a work in your days,  
A work which ye shall in no wise believe,  
if one declare it unto you.

And as they went out, they besought that **42**  
these words might be spoken to them the next  
sabbath. Now when the synagogue broke up, **43**

to those who have no wealth of works. St. Paul wished to end his sermon with a warning not to reject the new salvation, and he chose for that purpose a verse out of Habakkuk i. 5. It is natural to suppose that his reason for choosing this particular passage was that he was thinking of that famous verse Hab. ii. 4, and perhaps had actually quoted it in his sermon, 'the just shall live by his faith.' It is to be noticed that throughout the sermon there is no mention of the gospel being for Gentiles as well as for Jews. He addressed the children of Abraham and the God-fearers, but not those Gentiles who were not associated with the synagogue. Such a gospel the Jews were willing to hear ; they thought they could retain their caste privilege as God's 'chosen people', and they invited St. Paul to preach again next sabbath. After the service the Jews and God-fearers spoke privately to the apostles and were encouraged to

many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas : who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

- 44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.  
45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and

persevere in the good favour of God. The word translated 'devout' refers to the God-fearers, and this is the only place where they are spoken of as 'proselytes.' We must regard the addition of the word 'proselytes' as strictly speaking an inaccuracy.

44-52. We are left in the dark as to what happened in the interval between the two sabbaths. As St. Paul had said nothing about the inclusion of the Gentiles in his sermon we must assume that he had spoken privately to Gentiles and told them that there was no restriction of the Christian gospel. The news of this amazing change of Jewish mentality spread like wildfire through the city. An enormous crowd gathered together next sabbath—'nearly the whole city' St. Luke calls it, a pardonable exaggeration—to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw that the apostles were prepared to preach the same gospel to the Gentiles they naturally felt that they had been deceived : Paul while pretending to be an orthodox Jew was preaching a system which would undermine the superiority of Jew over Gentile, which

blasphemed. And Paul and Barnabas spake **46** out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord com- **47** manded us, *saying*,

I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,  
That thou shouldest be for salvation unto  
the uttermost part of the earth.

to the average Jew seemed of the essence of his religion. The Jews therefore contradicted the message of St. Paul, and spoke evil, presumably both of Jesus and of St. Paul. Now was St. Paul's opportunity. Years before he had been commissioned to preach to the Gentiles. To some extent he had done so, at Antioch and in Cyprus, if not also in Cilicia and Arabia, but had been always hampered by a desire to conciliate the Jews. Now the Jews of Antioch had rejected the gospel, and the gospel was free! No longer need he suggest to Gentile converts that it would be better if for the sake of the Jews they gave up eating pork and working on the sabbath. The gospel was freed from those regulations of the Jews, free to be a universal religion, in which every nation would be at liberty to follow its own customs so long as they did not conflict with the holy morality of God. And in setting Christianity free from the trammels of Mosaic Law to soar aloft in the broad expanse, St. Paul knew that he was no renegade

48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God : and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.  
49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad  
50 throughout all the region. But the Jews urged on the devout women of honourable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast  
51 them out of their borders. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came  
52 unto Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

from the faith of his fathers. For their Sacred Book itself had foretold this freedom, and with joy he proclaimed to the Gentiles the words written in its pages, ' I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth ' (Isa. xlix. 6). These words met with an immediate response from the Gentiles, and many became Christians. St. Luke is careful to say that it was not *all* the Gentiles who believed, but *many* for whom eternal life was destined. There is no suggestion here of that later impious suggestion that God had decided before creation which of His creatures He would prepare for everlasting heaven and which for everlasting hell : a theory, which arose from human arrogance thinking to understand the whole workings of God's purpose, and resulted in attributing to God an immoral character. The

And it came to pass in Iconium, that they <sup>141</sup> entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. But <sup>2</sup> the Jews that were disobedient stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren. Long time <sup>3</sup> therefore they tarried *there* speaking boldly in the Lord, which bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to

immediate result of St. Paul's preaching was the spread of Christianity, not only in the city, but also in the neighbouring districts, till the Jews, by underhand intrigue carried on through the wives of leading men, succeeded in having the missionaries expelled from the city. For them the indignity was nothing. They were filled with joy and Divine inspiration at the acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles.

1-7. Driven from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas made their way to Iconium, where their experience was similar to that in Antioch. In verse 1 we should translate 'in the same manner', i.e. at Antioch, instead of 'together'. It is because the experience was so similar that St. Luke gives only a summary account. There is some dislocation in the text as we have it now, for after speaking in verse 2 of the opposition raised against the apostles it goes on 'Long time therefore they tarried. . . .' The Bezan text has tried to mend matters by inserting extra

4 be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with 5 the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was made an onset both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to entreat them shamefully, and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the 7 region round about: and there they preached the gospel.

sentences according to which the persecution died down, and then later another persecution started. The simplest solution is to conjecture that verse 3 has been misplaced, and should follow directly after verse 1, thus, 'And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered in the same way into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. Long time therefore they tarried there, speaking boldly in reliance on the Lord, who bare witness unto the work of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and made them evil affected against the brethren. And the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews and part with the apostles.' The narrative then goes on to say that a sudden attack was made by Jews and Gentiles together; and it is natural to suppose that the Jews gained the support of leading Gentiles in the same way that they had done at Antioch. Only



And at Lystra there sat a certain man, im-8  
potent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's  
womb, who never had walked. The same 9  
heard Paul speaking: who, fastening his eyes  
upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be  
made whole, said with a loud voice, Stand 10  
upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and  
walked. And when the multitudes saw what 11  
Paul had done, they lifted up their voice,  
saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods  
are come down to us in the likeness of men.

in this case their plan was not merely to drive Paul and Barnabas away, but to stone them. This plot was frustrated by the apostles hearing of it and fleeing at once to the Lycaonian district which included the towns of Lystra and Derbe. It may be that the mention of the region about Lystra and Derbe means that Christian converts fled also and went into the country districts while Paul and Barnabas only worked in the towns.

8-18. One of the converts at Lystra was Timothy, of Jewish birth on his mother's side. He is first mentioned by name in xvi. 1, but it is reasonable to suppose that he was converted on this first visit, and that he supplied St. Luke with the graphic account of what happened at Lystra. There was a certain cripple, lame from birth, who had been listening to St. Paul's preaching. The verb used in verse 9 indicates that he had been listening on more than one occasion; he was not merely in the audience at one

- 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker.
- 13 And the priest of Jupiter whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice
- 14 with the multitudes. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multi-
- 15 tude, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them

particular sermon. The Bezan text adds that he feared God, as if he was already associated with the Jewish synagogue. This addition arose from a misunderstanding of the statement in verse 9 that St. Paul saw he had faith to be healed, taking the verb translated, 'to be healed' in the sense of 'to be saved.' St. Paul healed him because he had faith to be healed, and not because he was a likely convert. The effect of the miracle on the crowd was unexpected. They thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods. Paul, they supposed must be Hermes, for Hermes, both in the old religion and in the newer Mystery Religions, was associated with speech and revelation ; and Barnabas, they supposed to be Zeus. (The names Jupiter and Mercury in the English versions of the

is : who in the generations gone by suffered 16  
all the nations to walk in their own ways.  
And yet he left not himself without witness, 17  
in that he did good, and gave you from heaven  
rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts  
with food and gladness. And with these 18  
sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes  
from doing sacrifice unto them.

Bible are the Latin gods corresponding to the Greek Zeus and Hermes). Such was the excitement of the crowd that they lapsed into their native Lycaonian tongue, and the apostles who could only converse with them in Greek did not know what they were saying. It was only when the priest of Zeus had made preparations for a great public sacrifice in honour of the supposed epiphany of the gods that the apostles discovered what was afoot. They were horrified at their discovery, horrified that the pagans' idea of divinity was so low that they could imagine an epiphany, or *avatar* as we should say, in the form of two ordinary mortals. It was all on a level with the low ideas of God associated with idolatry, and St. Paul in his speech tried to turn their thoughts towards a greater God than they had ever conceived, a living God, mighty creator of all things, who by His good gifts of material things had been declaring His goodness and power even to these ignorant pagans. It was St. Paul's belief that the material things of the world were intended to show forth the might of God, as he said in Rom. i. 20, ' For the invisible things of

- 19 But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out

Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity.' But all the same in spite of the witness of these created things, the heathen world had not attained to a true knowledge of God, but through a false conception of God had been abandoned to wrong values in the moral life (Rom. i. 21-32).

19-28. The sudden change of mind of the crowd takes one by surprise, and it would be interesting to know by what arguments the Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuaded the multitude. The Bezan text has attempted an explanation by adding that the Jews asserted that 'nothing which they say is true, but all false.' Yet, it was not the teaching of the apostles which had led the crowd to think them gods but the wonderful work of healing. More probably the Jews asserted that this work, so far from being a work of God, was a work of devils—the same method by which they had attempted to discredit the miracles of healing wrought by our Lord. Anyhow the mob was roused to sudden fury and stoned St. Paul inside the city. They did not wait for any judicial enquiry, for a judicial stoning would have taken place outside the city. When they thought he was dead they dragged his body outside the city. As the disciples stood round he recovered. St. Luke does not state whether it was a miracle, or whether St. Paul was only stunned,

of the city, supposing that he was dead. But<sup>20</sup> as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and entered into the city: and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the<sup>21</sup> gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium,

observing the same reticence as in the case of Eutychus (xx. 9-12). This is in great contrast to later writers, who freely magnified, or even invented miracles. St. Paul was able to walk into the city—it was presumably in the dark of night—and next day started off on a journey to Derbe. This stoning of St. Paul is mentioned in 2 Cor. xi. 25. No mention is made of any incidents at Derbe beyond the fact of many conversions. By the time the apostles had reached Derbe they were well on the road to Tarsus, and it would have been an easy matter for them to continue the journey thither and so return home again. But two considerations prevented them from so doing. The first was that as soon as they left Derbe eastwards they would have crossed the frontier of the Empire into the kingdom of Antiochus, and it seems to have been a principle of St. Paul to make full use of the security offered by Roman administration. The second reason was the urgent need of encouraging the new converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, who had been suffering persecution for their faith since the flight of the apostles. Timothy probably had good cause to remember the words of comfort that St. Paul

**22** and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we

spoke, 'Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.' The apostles therefore retraced their steps and not only spoke words of comfort to the new disciples, but provided as far as possible for their future well-being by appointing elders. Both Jews and Gentiles were familiar with the idea of elders over any religious community. The method of appointment is not certain, since the word used here, although it originally meant appointment by vote, had acquired by this time a more general meaning. We can however be sure that the opinion of the local congregations and the advice of the apostles were both given due weight. The important thing is that the appointment was accompanied by prayer and fasting, that is, it was not undertaken lightly as a worldly appointment, but only after solemn waiting upon God. The title given to the elders 'presbyteroi' is the origin of our words 'presbyter' and 'priest', the second order of the ministry as it emerged at the close of New Testament times. No further details are given of this return journey, except that on reaching Perga they preached there, and then sailed from the port Attalia direct to Antioch. There they met again the Church which had sent them forth with God's blessing, and they related the triumph of the Faith among the Gentiles—the wonderful fact which we sing in the Church's later hymn of praise, 'When thou hadst overcome the

must enter into the kingdom of God. And<sup>23</sup> when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. And they passed through<sup>24</sup>

sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.' The words 'they rehearsed what great things God had done with them' illustrate the motto of William Carey, the missionary of Bengal, 'Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.'

**The Epistle to the Galatians.** There has been much discussion with regard to the epistle to the Galatians, with regard both to the date of its composition and to the people of whom it was sent. It used to be thought that it was sent to the people known as the Galatae who lived in the north of Asia Minor with Ancyra as their chief city. This is however no evidence that St. Paul ever visited those parts and it was shown by Ramsay that the Roman Province of Galatia extended much to the south and included the towns of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe which had been evangelized by St. Paul on his first journey, and indeed that as those towns were partly Lycaonian and partly Phrygian there was no other name than Galatians which would have included them all. Ramsay's view is now generally accepted, and need not be argued afresh in these pages. With the acceptance of this view as to the destination of the epistle there can be little doubt about the approximate



25 Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went  
26 down to Attalia; and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which

time when it was written. The epistle records two visits of St. Paul to Jerusalem, the second of which we have shown reason to believe is the visit recorded in Acts xi. 30 just before St. Paul's first missionary journey. Then in Gal. ii. 11, 12, we read that St. Peter was at Antioch and was interdining with Gentile Christians; but that certain people came from James, i.e. from Jerusalem, and after their arrival St. Peter separated himself, and would not eat with the Gentile Christians for fear of offending the Jewish Christians. These emissaries from James are doubtless the same people who are mentioned in Acts xv. 1, 'And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, saying, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic custom, you cannot be saved."' Acts records the commotion caused by this teaching, the decision to go to Jerusalem to discuss the question, and the Council of Jerusalem which settled the matter and issued a formal pronouncement on the subject. Gal. does not mention the Council and only records the commotion caused in Antioch, mentioning in particular the disagreement on the question between St. Peter and St. Paul. As this is the latest event mentioned in Galatians we can scarcely be wrong in supposing that

they had fulfilled. And when they were come, **27** and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. And they tarried no **28** little time with the disciples.

Galatians was written at that juncture, either in Antioch itself or during the journey from Antioch to Jerusalem. It is natural to suppose that the same sort of people who insisted on circumcision in Antioch also travelled as far as Galatia and persuaded the Galatian Christians to adopt the Jewish Law. The fairly long stay of St. Paul at Antioch (Acts xiv. 28) allows ample time for these Judaizing emissaries to reach Galatia and for the news of the defection of the Galatian Christians to reach St. Paul at Antioch. Gal. was evidently written when St. Paul had recently heard this bad news and his feelings were deeply stirred. Moreover it is almost certain that if the Council of Jerusalem had already taken place he would have mentioned its decisions which so fully supported his own position. If the date here suggested is correct it makes Gal. the earliest of St. Paul's epistles which have survived. The main argument against its early date is its similarity to the epistles to Rome and Corinth and its dissimilarity from the epistles to Thessalonica. We do not however know enough of St. Paul's development of thought to be able to assert positively that all his earlier epistles must have been like 1 and 2 Thessalonians and that

151 And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, *saying*, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, *the brethren* appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and

the style of Romans, Corinthians and Galatians was only developed later.

*The Council of Jerusalem, xv. 1-29*

1-5. The chapter opens with the record of a visit to Antioch of certain Jewish Christians who insisted that all Christians must be circumcised, that is to say, Gentiles desirous of becoming Christians must adopt the whole Jewish Law. The same visit is referred to in verse 24 of this chapter, 'Certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls,' and also in Gal. ii. 12, 'Before certain persons came from James.' Now it seems that before the arrival of these Judaising Christians, ever since the early preaching of the faith to the Greeks in Antioch (Acts xi. 20), the Gentile Christians in Antioch had been accepted as brethren by the Jewish Christians without being compelled to obey the Jewish ceremonial Law. The arrival of these Judaisers caused consternation among the Jewish Christians. 'What,' they thought, 'if our attitude of laxity towards the Gentile Christians should

elders about this question. They therefore,<sup>3</sup> being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they<sup>4</sup> were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things

compromise our position with our Jewish Christian brethren?' The argument put thus, or perhaps put less crudely in the form, 'Why should we cause offence to our Jewish brethren?' resulted in most of the Jewish Christians holding aloof from social intercourse with the Gentile Christians. For the moment even St. Peter and St. Barnabas were persuaded to adopt this unchristian attitude, till St. Paul, zealous for the freedom of the gospel, rebuked St. Peter in public, pointing out the inconsistency of his behaviour. All this is recorded in Gal. ii. 11-14. From what follows we shall see that St. Paul's words convinced St. Peter and St. Barnabas, for they both sided with St. Paul in the controversy that followed. Acts tells us nothing of the temporary defection of Peter and Barnabas, and in verse 2, Paul and Barnabas appear ranged on one side in the controversy against the Judaisers. It was decided that Paul and Barnabas and certain others from Antioch should go up to Jerusalem and discuss this question with the apostles and presbyters who were there. The decision to go up to Jerusalem was taken by the whole Church

5 that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

of Antioch, the chief city of the Roman Province of Syria and Cilicia, and may therefore be regarded as a reference by the Church of the Province of Syria and Cilicia to the mother Church of Jerusalem. It speaks well for the disputants that, for the sake of unity, they were willing to refer to Jerusalem. It was probably just at the same time that St. Paul heard that Judaisers had also travelled as far as Galatia, and were enforcing their demands on the new converts. No time was to be lost. In a few weeks irreparable damage might be done. So in hot haste he penned the epistle to the Galatians. It is thus to be noted that although the crisis was probably more serious in Galatia than in Antioch, the Churches of Galatia had not referred the question to Jerusalem, so that when the formal decree was issued by the Council it was only officially addressed and delivered to the Churches of the Province of Syria and Cilicia (verses 23 and 30), although St. Paul also delivered copies of the decree to the Churches of Galatia as supporting what he had already written to them (xvi. 4). On their way to the Council Paul and Barnabas passed through Phœnicia and Samaria, and announced how the Gentiles were turning God-wards. This news was received with great joy, as the Christians in those

And the apostles and the elders were<sup>6</sup> gathered together to consider of this matter. And when there had been much questioning,<sup>7</sup> Peter rose up, and said unto them,

Brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of

parts would be mostly non-Jewish by birth. In Jerusalem where Jewish national prejudice was strong, there was not the same expression of joy at the news of the great things that God had done, though the apostles were received in a friendly manner.

6-35. The apostles and elders were gathered together for the Council, and the debate began with much questioning. We can imagine that various Jewish Christians, especially Pharisees, called in question the behaviour of Barnabas and Paul at Antioch, and pointed out the danger of the Jewish element in the Church being swamped by the large accession of Gentile converts. Then St. Peter rose to speak. On a previous occasion, at the time of the famine relief, he had declared himself as entrusted with the gospel of the Circumcision (Gal. ii. 7), and quite recently he had bowed to the scruples of the Judaisers at Antioch (Gal. ii. 12), so that the Judaisers would have expected him to side with them at this Council. But he had taken to heart the rebuke of St. Paul, and had been thinking out the problem on his way to the Council. At last he saw his own experience of the early days in the conversion of

8 the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us ;  
9 and he made no distinction between us and  
10 them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to

Cornelius in its true perspective. He saw that he, so far from being merely entrusted with the gospel of the Circumcision, had been chosen by God to be the first from whose mouth the Gentiles should hear the gospel and believe. The words of St. Paul were still ringing in his ears, ' Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but only through faith in Christ Jesus ' (Gal. ii. 16), and he boldly declared, ' We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they.' A great impression was made on the meeting by St. Peter's support of the broader-minded party. And they therefore listened patiently while St. Paul and St. Barnabas told the thrilling story of the miracles of healing and conversion which God had worked among the Gentiles. St. James, the Lord's brother, then addressed the meeting, summing up what he felt was the opinion of the rest. After referring to Symeon's speech (the form of Simon Peter's name is an indication that St. James was speaking in Aramaic), he proceeded to quote from the prophets to show that God's purpose of old had included the Gentiles in its



bear? But we believe that we shall be saved **11** through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

And all the multitude kept silence; and **12** they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God

scope. The actual quotation given is from the Greek version of Amos ix. 11, 12, and the point of the quotation rests chiefly in the words 'that the residue of men may seek after the Lord.' St. James must have quoted the text in Hebrew, but our present Hebrew text, instead of the sentence just mentioned, has 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom.' We must conclude that St. Luke has composed the speech which he puts into the mouth of St. James, unless indeed the Hebrew text then current was nearer our Greek version than our Hebrew text. It is most probable that St. Luke only knew that St. James had quoted some universalistic passage or passages from the Old Testament, but did not know which ones he had quoted. St. James then gave his decision that the Gentiles should not be troubled with the Jewish Law, but that a letter should be sent to them warning them of the three most serious moral offences, idolatry, fornication and murder. There is a difficulty in arriving at the text in verses 20 and 29. The great majority of manuscripts, including those that we usually follow as providing the best text, mention four prohibitions—the pollutions of idols or things sacrificed to idols, fornication, blood and things strangled,

- had wrought among the Gentiles by them.
- 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying,
- 14 Brethren, hearken unto me : Symeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

as in R. V. The Bezan text omits ' things strangled ', but adds ' and not to do to another what you do not wish done to yourselves,' and at the end ' being carried along in the Holy Spirit.' Both these types of text were current in the second century, but both contain serious difficulties. The difficulties of the R.V. text are (i) that one moral offence, fornication, is coupled with three food-laws ; and (ii) when in later years the question of meat offered to idols arose at Corinth, St. Paul did not quote this decision which so obviously bore on the case. The Bezan text removes both these difficulties, because in the absence of ' things strangled ' the other three prohibitions are clearly against the moral offences of idolatry, fornication and murder. But the Bezan text cannot be right as it stands, for it says, ' not to do to another what you do not wish done to yourselves, from which if ye keep yourselves it shall be well with you.' One witness for the Bezan text, however, namely Tertullian, omits the word ' things strangled,' but does not add the two sentences which are found in the other Bezan authorities. It is most probable that this is the original text, which has been altered in two directions : (1) the chief manuscripts, taking the word ' blood ' as a food restriction instead

And to this agree the words of the prophets ; 15  
as it is written,

After these things I will return, 16

And I will build again the tabernacle of  
David, which is fallen ;

And I will build again the ruins thereof,

And I will set it up :

That the residue of men may seek after 17  
the Lord,

And all the Gentiles, upon whom my  
name is called,

Saith the Lord, who maketh these things 18  
known from the beginning of the world.

of in the sense of 'murder,' added 'things strangled' as an explanation, (2) the Bezan text, in order to emphasize that these were moral requirements added the negative form of the Golden Rule.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion thus reached is of the utmost importance. If food-laws had been enacted it would have meant that St. Paul accepted a compromise, that he would insist on part of the Jewish ceremonial law, but not on all. As it is, the decision was a complete triumph for the universality of the gospel. None of the Jewish ceremonial law was to be enforced, and the converts were only warned about serious moral offences which the human conscience universally condemns. For the

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion see Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 48-60.

19 Wherefore my judgement is, that we trouble  
not them which from among the Gentiles turn  
20 to God ; but that we write unto them, that  
they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and  
from fornication, and from what is strangled,

rest of the moral enactments of Judaism, St. James said (verse 21) that it was sufficient that the Old Testament was widely known, so that the Gentile converts would be able to consider them in the light of the inspiration of Christ. St. James' decision met with general approval. For these Christians were not party politicians, voting against one another. They were men inspired by the Holy Spirit, seeking to know God's will, arriving at unanimity in view of the obvious blessing of God upon the Gentile work. By way of showing their full approval of the actions of Paul and Barnabas the decree embodying the Council's decision was entrusted to them, with two others, Judas Barsabbas and Silas, to confirm the truth of what was written. The decree was addressed to 'The brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.' The bearers of the decree brought it to Antioch, the chief city of Syria and Cilicia, and read it publicly amidst much rejoicing, at a large assembly ; and having themselves the gift of preaching, they were able by their words to encourage and strengthen the disciples. After the fulfilment of their task Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem (unless perhaps the Bezan text may be correct in saying that Silas remained at Antioch).

and from blood. For Moses from generations 21  
of old hath in every city them that preach him,  
being read in the synagogues every sabbath.

Then it seemed good to the apostles and 22  
the elders, with the whole church, to choose  
men out of their company, and send them to  
Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*,  
Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men

The decision of the Council of Jerusalem and the controversy that led up to it were vital to the history of Christianity. Had the decision gone the other way two courses might have followed. Either the Christian Church would have remained purely Jewish, only including such few Gentiles as were willing to submit to the Jewish law and practically to adopt Jewish nationality; or there would have been two Churches, the one confined to the Jewish nation and lacking that power which flows inwards from outward expansion, the other non-Jewish expanding freely outwards, but lacking the historical bond with the Founder of Christianity and the nation and religion in which He was nurtured. In this latter case of two Churches, there can be little doubt that the Jewish Church would have sunk to the position of a Jewish sect, like the Pharisees or Sadducees; and the non-Jewish Church, lacking the historical connection with the faith of the Old Testament, would have wandered off into risky speculations something like the Gnostic sects of the early Church. The decision then that allowed the expansion of the Church in union with the

- 23 among the brethren: and they wrote *thus* by them, The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in  
24 Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we

seedling from which it sprang was vital to the existence of the Church as Christ intended it.

Our minds are carried back to an occasion in Old Testament history when a similar choice was placed before the people of Israel. A great prophet in Babylon, whose writings are preserved in some of the later chapters of Isaiah, had urged the Israelites to take the opportunity of their return to the Holy Land and offer their religion to the world. Soon after the commencement of their return, when the temple at Jerusalem was being built, the Jews had an opportunity of putting in practice the teaching of their great prophet. For the Samaritans, their northern neighbours, largely of Israelite origin, desired to join in the building of the temple and in the worship there when it was complete. But among the Jews in Jerusalem at that time none had the vision of Second Isaiah, and with unanimous voice they drove away the Samaritans from the worship of Yahweh, saying, 'You have nothing to do with us to build a temple to our God.' From that fatal decision dated the gradual narrowing of Judaism, the cessation of prophecy and the growth of the weeds of legalism. Christ and the

gave no commandment ; it seemed good unto **25**  
us, having come to one accord, to choose out  
men and send them unto you with our beloved

apostles so to speak picked up the religious expansion of Israel from that point, as is seen by their frequent use of the writings of Second Isaiah which had been neglected or misunderstood by the Jews.

As our minds are carried back to that decision of the sixth century B. C. our minds are also carried forward to many similar decisions in the course of Church History when broad views of God's worldwide scheme of salvation have been hidden by some narrow sectarian view. When a set of Christians separate themselves from the main body of their fellows because they desire an observance of the seventh day of the week according to the Jewish law, or because this doctrine or that appears in their eyes of supreme importance, they are following the narrow policy which the Council of Jerusalem so emphatically disowned.

In our own days voices are heard again favouring a division of the Christian Church in India into an Indian and an English section. Let the Indian Christians, they say, have a Church of their own and let them develop Christianity according to their national bent, with appropriate rites and ceremonies ; and let the English Christians remain part of the Church of England neither interfering with nor interfered by the Indian Church. One can almost hear the voices of the Judaisers again, and the storm of protest from St. Paul at such denial of a universal Christ. The result



- 26 Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus  
27 Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the

of such a schism would be similar to the results that would have followed if the Council of Jerusalem had surrendered to the Judaizers. The English Church in India, cut off from the expanding missionary Church would dwindle in strength like a tree robbed of its branches; and the Indian Church, cut off from the Church which evangelized it, would be as unstable as a tree without a root.

**The remainder of St. Peter's life.** After this chapter we read nothing further in the Acts about St. Peter. Whether from lack of information, or from some other cause that we have no knowledge of, the author is strangely silent. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that he did not pretend to give a complete account of the expansion of the Church; but, in illustration of what was being done by other apostles also, he described in detail the thrilling story of those missionary journeys of St. Paul of which he had first-hand evidence, partly as an eye-witness, and partly from the lips of St. Paul. Can we gather from the rest of the New Testament, and from other traditions, anything of the later movements of St. Peter? The question has in the West been hotly debated, particularly with regard to St. Peter's activities at Rome. On the one hand Roman Catholics have felt a natural desire to stress those traditions which lengthened St.

same things by word of mouth. For it seemed 28 good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary

Peter's stay in Rome, in order to gain for the see of Rome the promise of authority given by our Lord first to St. Peter. Protestants, on the other hand, have been equally biassed in the other direction to minimize the connexion of St. Peter with Rome. It is however obvious that the enquiry ought to be made as a research into hard historical facts, into which the bias of later ecclesiastical controversy has no right to intrude. The evidence that St. Peter worked in Rome, and was martyred there is as follows :—

(1) The first epistle of St. Peter was written from Babylon (1 Pet. v. 13). We know that the name ' Babylon ' was used in the Revelation and elsewhere for ' Rome ', and it is very probable that that is also the case here.

(2) Clement of Rome, writing to Corinth in A.D. 96 refers to the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul as well-known facts.

(3) The *Ascension of Isaiah* is a composite work of different dates. The section with which we are concerned is thought by Dr. R. H. Charles to date between A.D. 88 and 100. It says (iv. 2, 3), ' Beliar . . . will descend . . . in the form of a man, a lawless king, murderer of his mother, who, even this very king, will persecute the plant which the twelve apostles of the Beloved shall plant; and one of the twelve shall be delivered into his hands.' The

29 things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

'murderer of his mother' is obviously Nero, and the 'one of the twelve' is most probably St. Peter.

(4) Ignatius, writing to Rome in A. D. 109 says (*ad Rom.* iv), 'I do not command you like Peter and Paul. They were apostles . . .'

(5) Dionysius of Corinth (about A.D. 171) is quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles.* ii. 25) as speaking of the planting of Romans and Corinthians by Peter and Paul.

(6) Irenæus (*Adv. Haer.* iii. 3, and Eusebius *Hist. Eccles.* v. 6) about A.D. 180 speaks of 'the Church of Rome which was founded and constituted by the two glorious apostles Peter and Paul,' and again, 'The blessed apostles, having founded and built up the Church, handed over the care of the episcopacy to Linus.'

(7) In the Christian catacombs in Rome the name of Peter is fairly common. As it was not ordinarily a common name, the suggestion arises that a number of Christians were called after St. Peter. Ancient portraits of Peter and Paul are found in Rome, painted or in metal, and it is claimed by archæologists that these traditional likenesses go back actually to the time of the apostles. This of course is evidence which it is hard to prove or disprove.

So they, when they were dismissed, came<sup>30</sup> down to Antioch; and having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle. And when they had read it, they rejoiced for<sup>31</sup> the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being<sup>32</sup> themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren

(8) St. Paul himself gives us evidence that some other missionary had founded the Church in Rome. In his epistle to the Romans, xv. 19-24, he explains that he had often wished to go to Rome, but had been hindered by a principle he had adopted of working where Christ had not been named so as not to build on another man's foundation.

This array of evidence is so strong that it leaves little room for doubt that St. Peter visited Rome and was martyred there. But so far none of this evidence gives the date of St. Peter's arrival in Rome, except the last (Rom. xv.) which, if it refers to St. Peter, shows that he must have been in Rome several years before A.D. 55 (the date of Romans) as St. Paul says that he had been *many times* hindered from going to Rome (Rom. xv. 22).

The traditions that St. Peter spent a long time in Rome may be traced to two distinct sources. One series of traditions goes back to Hippolytus (about A.D. 230), and this gives the episcopate from A.D. 30-55. The other stream of tradition goes back to the *Chronicle* of Eusebius (about A.D. 325) which gives the dates A.D. 42-67. Both these traditions conflict with Acts and Galatians (according to which

33 with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had spent some time *there*, they were dismissed in peace from the brethren

St. Peter was at Jerusalem and Antioch in A.D. 49 or thereabouts, Acts xv, Gal. ii. 11), and may safely be rejected. Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* records another tradition that St. Peter went to Rome in the reign of Claudius, i.e. somewhere between A.D. 41 and 54, and that is not impossible.

St. Peter's stay in Antioch is magnified in later tradition into an episcopate lasting two, seven, or ten years.

Several verses in 1 Corinthians (i. 12, iii. 22, ix. 5, 6) suggest that St. Peter was known to the Christians in Corinth before A.D. 55 (the date of 1 Cor.).

Rejecting therefore the late traditions as to a long episcopacy in Rome, it is almost certain that he did visit Rome, and probable that he visited Corinth. Possibly also he visited the places to which he addressed his epistle (1 Peter i. 1), Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. With these possibilities and probabilities we can construct a provisional programme of his movements as follows :—

A.D. 47. St. Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey. Soon afterwards St. Peter went to Antioch, where he met St. Paul (Gal. ii. 11) on his return from the first missionary journey.

A.D. 49. St. Peter was present at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv). Being convinced of God's plan for the Gentiles he determined to evangelize Rome—the chief unoccupied field.

unto those that had sent them forth.<sup>1</sup> But **35**  
Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching  
and preaching the word of the Lord, with  
many others also.

And after some days Paul said unto Barna- **36**  
bas, Let us return now and visit the brethren  
in every city wherein we proclaimed the word  
of the Lord, *and see* how they fare. And **37**  
Barnabas was minded to take with them John

A.D. 49 or 50. Claudius expelled Jews from Rome ; but the edict may have been of short duration and certainly was never completely carried out, and St. Peter may have reached Rome by 50 or 51.

A.D. 54. St. Peter passed through Corinth on his way from Rome.

A.D. 55. St. Paul wrote to Corinth and referred to St. Peter and his wife, apparently as known to the Corinthians. In the same year St. Paul wrote to Rome and referred to some one having founded the Church there.

A.D. 54-63. St. Peter may have travelled in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, the places addressed in 1 Peter.

A.D. 64 or 65. St. Peter wrote 1 Peter from Rome, and was martyred there in the persecution of Nero.

36-41. The proposal made by St. Paul to St. Barnabas, that they should revisit the brethren in

<sup>1</sup> The authorities for the Bezan text insert, with variations, verse 34, ' But it seemed good unto Silas to abide there.'

38 also, who was called Mark. But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with  
39 them to the work. And there arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with  
40 him, and sailed away unto Cyprus ; but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended  
41 by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

every city where they had preached before, would presumably have included Cyprus as well as the cities of South Galatia. There was, however, a serious disagreement between the two apostles about the question whether John Mark should accompany them in view of his having left them on the first journey. (See the note on xiii. 4-12). They therefore decided to divide the work, Barnabas and his cousin Mark going to Cyprus, and Paul to Galatia. However high their feelings may have run at the time, it is pleasant to know that St. Paul valued St. Mark in later years (2 Tim. iv. 11, Col. iv. 10). St. Paul decided to take Silas with him, and they were sent forth by the brethren in the name of the Lord. The silence of the author does not prove that a similar farewell service of benediction was not held for Barnabas and Mark. Paul and Silas went through the Province of Syria and Cilicia. They did not



And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra : **161**  
and behold, a certain disciple was there, named  
Timothy, the son of a Jewess which believed ;  
but his father was a Greek. The same was **2**  
well reported of by the brethren that were at  
Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have **3**  
to go forth with him ; and he took and circum-  
cised him because of the Jews that were in  
those parts : for they all knew that his father

need to deliver the decree of the Council there, as it had presumably been already delivered by Judas and Silas. In Syria and in Cilicia St. Paul strengthened the disciples, namely, those that had been evangelized from Antioch, and those that had been evangelized in the early days by himself, especially in Tarsus (Gal. i. 21). From Tarsus they took the road northwards into the kingdom of Antiochus, through the mountain pass known as the Cilician Gates, and then westwards to Derbe, but not preaching till they came into Roman territory at Derbe.

1-5. At Lystra St. Paul found Timothy, who probably had been converted on the previous visit, and decided to take him as a fellow-worker. The fact that he circumcised Timothy has caused a great deal of difficulty to commentators. But it must be remembered that the victory just won at Jerusalem only said that the Law was not binding on non-Jews. The further question whether it was binding on Jews was only gradually being solved, and there had been no official pronouncement on the subject. As St.

- 4 was a Greek. And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.
- 6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the

Paul wanted to enter into the houses of unconverted Jews it would have been a hindrance to have with him a Jew, as Timothy was on his mother's side, who had never been circumcised, a renegade Jew as they would have called him. As they went through the cities of Galatia they delivered to them copies of the decrees of the Council, for though the decrees were only addressed to the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, they supported the truth of the epistle which St. Paul had recently sent to the Galatians. At this juncture, when St. Paul had completed his work in Galatia, and his policy had been publicly vindicated, St. Luke pauses (verse 5) to review the strengthening of the Church in those parts and its constant increase in numbers.

THE EVANGELIZATION OF MACEDONIA AND  
ACHAIA, xvi. 6-xviii. 23

6-10. This next paragraph tells us in a few words how it was that St. Paul's labours were transferred from Galatia to Macedonia. First, having passed through 'the Phrygian and Galatian country,' that is,

Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia ; and<sup>7</sup>  
when they were come over against Mysia, they  
assayed to go into Bithynia ; and the Spirit of  
Jesus suffered them not ; and passing by<sup>8</sup>

the country which belonged to the old district of Phrygia and formed part of the Roman Province of Galatia, they intended to travel straight westwards to Ephesus, the chief town in the Province of Asia. But a heavenly message—whether by vision, or by prophets, or some natural obstacle, we do not know—prevented their preaching in Asia, and they turned northwards towards Bithynia.<sup>1</sup> Here again heavenly intervention prevented them, and we get the unusual expression ‘the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.’ The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, but as His presence implies the presence of Christ, and as He came as a result of the promise of Jesus to send another Paraclete, the expression is perfectly justifiable. It is in the same sense that the Western form of the Nicene Creed speaks of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. Instead, therefore, of going into Bithynia they turned westwards again into Mysia. Mysia was part of Asia, so they were unable to work there, and the word translated ‘passing

<sup>1</sup> The compression of the narrative has resulted in an apparent statement in our best manuscripts that the prohibition to work in Asia came before the work in Galatian Phrygia. The later manuscripts have altered one word so as to make it clear that the prohibition to work in Asia followed the journey through Galatian Phrygia.

- 9 Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia,  
10 and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

by 'Mysia means that though they passed through Mysia they omitted it, not tarrying to preach there. Finally they came down to Troas on the sea-coast. From the presence of the first person 'we' in verse 10, we gather that St. Luke joined the party at Troas. It is unlikely that St. Luke's conversion dated only from that meeting, for St. Paul would scarcely have taken an almost complete stranger with him. This consideration lends weight to the Bezan text of xi. 28 which would bring St. Luke to Antioch in Syria several years earlier (see note on xi. 27-30). Ramsay gives reasons for thinking that St. Luke was a Macedonian, and makes the interesting conjecture that after St. Paul had met him at Troas and talked with him about Macedonia, St. Paul saw St. Luke in a dream calling him to Macedonia. Be that as it may, the entrance upon a new Province marked a new stage in St. Paul's missionary labours, so that St. Luke in drawing attention to the threefold guidance of the Spirit in inaugurating the work in Macedonia has not exaggerated the importance of this new venture.

Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made **11** a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; and from thence to **12** Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a *Roman* colony: and we were in this city tarrying certain days. And **13** on the sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, **14** a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things

11-15. They sailed from Troas, passing by the island of Somothrace which is about half-way, and landed at Neapolis, the port of Philippi. Philippi had been honoured by Augustus with the title of 'Colony' but the description of it as 'a city of Macedonia, the first of the district' is difficult to understand, for Amphipolis was at that time reckoned as the first city in that division of the Province. Ramsay suggests that St. Luke as a native of Philippi was making a claim for his own city which was only true in later years. One is tempted to conjecture that the text is corrupt, and to read 'protes' instead of 'prote tes,' when it would give the absolutely correct statement, 'which is a city of the first district of Macedonia, a Colony.' It appears that the Jewish population of

- 15 which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.
- 16 And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination met us, which brought her

Philippi was small, for they had no proper synagogue. St. Paul and his company went to an open-air place by the river where Jewish prayers were held, and found a congregation consisting entirely or almost entirely of women. One of these, a god-fearing woman named Lydia from Thyatira in Asia, a merchant in purple dye, was converted, and entertained the missionaries in her house.

16-40. On the way to the place of prayer they met a slave-girl who had the power of ventriloquism. This power was regarded with awe in those days as caused by some indwelling spirit, and the fortune-telling that the girl practised was a source of gain to her owners. Daily as she met the missionaries she hailed them 'servants of the Most High God who announce unto you a way of salvation.' It was enough that they were religious teachers; for the expressions she used, 'Most High God' and 'salvation', were common enough on heathen lips, and do not imply more than an ordinary knowledge of current Greek religious phraseology. But the words were true in a deeper sense than she knew, and the apostles did not

masters much gain by soothsaying. The same **17** following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation. And this she did for many days. But Paul, **18** being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

But when her masters saw that the hope of **19** their gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers, and when they had brought **20** them unto the magistrates, they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our

care to receive such testimony to their message, any more than our Lord cared to be witnessed to by men possessed with devils. St. Paul rebuked the spirit that possessed her, and she, supposing that her powers were due to such a spirit, was unable to ventriloquize any longer. This so enraged the girl's masters that they dragged Paul and Silas before the civil authorities, and brought against them the ingenious charge of teaching customs which it was not lawful for Romans to observe. The 'rulers' of verse 19 and the 'magistrates' or 'praetors' of verse 20 are the same people. The former term was used of the chief magistrates in any city; the latter was used by courtesy, though not technically correct, for



21 city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being  
22 Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat  
23 them with rods. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely :  
24 who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast  
25 in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them ;

the magistrates in a Roman Colony. The idea underlying the charge was that a Roman might not adopt a foreign religion. Judaism was actually a permitted religion, but the rulers and citizens of this Roman Colony, jealous for the honour of the Roman name, were in no mood to make a real inquiry into the charge, and without further ado Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison. St. Luke, though present, does not seem to have been arrested, so that his account is that of one who was probably near the prison all the time, but did not actually take part in the incidents he records. At midnight Paul and Silas were singing praise to God, and St. Luke from outside was very likely listening. Then came an earthquake, loosening the bolts of the doors and the wooden stocks in which the prisoners had been

and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so<sup>26</sup> that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken : and immediately all the doors were opened ; and every one's bands were loosed. And the jailor being roused out of sleep, and<sup>27</sup> seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried<sup>28</sup> with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm : for we are all here. And he called for lights,<sup>29</sup> and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them<sup>30</sup> out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the Lord<sup>31</sup> Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy

secured. The jailor rushed in in alarm and peering into the dark cell could not see anyone, and guessing that all the prisoners had escaped, knew that his life would be the penalty for not keeping them safely. But St. Paul from within saw his form with a drawn sword in his hand, in the open doorway, and called to him not to kill himself. Thoroughly unnerved the jailor called for lights and besought Paul and Silas saying, 'What shall I do to be saved ?' His own personal safety was doubtless uppermost in his mind, but he perhaps knew that these men were exponents of a new religion, and in superstitious fear connected the earthquake with their presence, and sought salvation from the spiritual powers that seemed to have

- 32 house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.  
33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ; and was baptized, he  
34 and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.  
35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent  
36 the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. And the jailor reported the words to Paul, *saying*, The magistrates have sent to let you go : now

risen up against him. The missionaries were quick to answer, and set forth faith in Jesus as the way of salvation ; while the jailor tended to their bodily needs. The jailor and his household accepted the new faith and were straightway baptized as Christians. The fact of the baptism of the whole household, presumably including children, has often been quoted as supporting infant baptism. Infant baptism rests on surer grounds than this, the ground that all men of every type and age have the right to a place in the kingdom of God, as the little children found a blessing in the arms of Jesus. Apart from such a sure ground we probably should no more allow this as a precedent for baptizing infants than we should baptize adults who had only heard the gospel for a few hours and had been induced to listen to it out of superstitious fright. At day-break the magistrates

therefore come forth, and go in peace. But<sup>37</sup> Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out. And the<sup>38</sup> serjeants reported these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans: and they came and<sup>39</sup> besought them; and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the

sent an order by the lictors to release the prisoners. The magistrates themselves had been alarmed at the earthquake shock and had connected it with their illegal proceedings of the day before, consideration of which decided them that the wisest course was to let the men go. Their alarm was increased when the lictors returned with a message in Latin, 'They have beaten us publicly without enquiry and we are Roman citizens.' To beat a Roman citizen was an unforgivable offence. Even if they had been condemned it would not have lessened the offence, and indeed would have made it more serious. The word translated 'uncondemned' cannot therefore have that meaning here, and as St. Paul's claim to citizenship would certainly be made in Latin it is probable that the word stands for '*re incognita*' which means 'without any enquiry being made.' There is an element of humour in the situation of the magistrates

40 city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

171 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

who yesterday had been so eager to uphold the honour of Rome suddenly discovering the dishonour that they themselves had done to Roman citizens. The humour of the situation did not escape St. Paul who insisted on the magistrates themselves coming to set him free. But it was not only to satisfy his personal feelings that St. Paul made this demand. It was more for the purpose of demonstrating that Roman Law had found nothing illegal in the Christian faith.

1-9. Leaving Philippi the missionaries traversed the great road known as the Via Egnatia till they came to Thessalonica. As the narrative resumes the third person 'they' we may assume that St. Luke stayed in Philippi. The first person 'we' appears again in xx. 5 when St. Paul left Macedonia for Troas, so we must understand that St. Luke stayed in Macedonia till he rejoined St. Paul on that last journey to Jerusalem. At Thessalonica there was a larger number of Jews than at Philippi, so that they had a synagogue there. For three sabbath days St. Paul argued from the Scriptures in the synagogue. It is interesting to notice the teaching which he gave,

and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto **2** them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging, **3** that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, *said he*, I proclaim unto you, is the

which St. Luke has so skilfully compressed into verse 3. It consisted of two parts: (1) he proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah must suffer and rise again from the dead. Actually in the Old Testament there are a number of passages dealing with an ideal king of the future, the anointed one, or Messiah; and also the passages in Second Isaiah dealing with the Servant of the Lord who should attain to triumph through suffering. Nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that these two personalities are the same. No one in fact thought of such a possibility till they saw Jesus reigning on the Cross, and St. Luke has recorded in his gospel how Christ Himself first showed from the Old Testament that the Messiah must suffer and so enter into his glory (Luke xxiv. 26). Then (2) St. Paul went on to prove that 'the Messiah is this man, Jesus, whom I declare unto you.' It will be seen that he started with the Old Testament, proved the sort of man the Messiah was foretold to be, and then showed that this fitted in with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Acts only tells of this three weeks' activity in the synagogue, and concludes it by saying that some of the Jews were persuaded and a great multitude of devout

4 Christ. And some of them were persuaded,  
and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the  
devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the  
5 chief women not a few. But the Jews, being  
moved with jealousy, took unto them certain  
vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a  
crowd, set the city on an uproar ; and assault-  
ing the house of Jason, they sought to bring

Greeks and not a few of the principal women. It then goes on at once to relate the uproar that led to St. Paul's departure from Thessalonica, as if it followed immediately on the three weeks' work among the Jews. Yet when we read 1 Thessalonians, a letter written by St. Paul soon afterwards to Thessalonica, we find many references to the heathen and idolatrous origin of the converts. From this we must conclude that St. Paul's ministry was not confined to the synagogue, and it is simplest to suppose that after his work in the synagogue he turned to the Gentiles and worked amongst them. We might allow a considerable interval of time during which he preached to the Gentiles before the uproar of verse 5. It is strange that St. Luke should not have mentioned this work and the large number of Gentile converts. The later manuscripts indeed do refer to these by the addition of two words in verse 4, reading : ' And there were added to Paul and Silas many of the devout (i.e. God-fearers), and a great multitude of Greeks, and not a few of the principal women.' This may be an intentional correction of the text, but if so it is an



them forth to the people. And when they 6 found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ; whom Jason hath receiv-7 ed : and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, *one*

extraordinarily accurate one. Ramsay thinks it must be the original text written by St. Luke. The end of St. Paul's work at Thessalonica, as in many other places, was owing to jealousy of the Jews. In this case they got the assistance of some 'roughs' or agitators and attacked the house of Jason in which Paul and his party were staying. Jason may or may not have been a convert. Anyhow they dragged Jason as well as certain Christian converts to the magistrates. The magistrates are here described by the rare title 'politarchs,' which inscriptions have proved to have been the title of the Thessalonian magistrates—another mark of St. Luke's accuracy. The charge laid by the Jews before the politarchs was, first, that the Christian missionaries had turned the world upside down, and second that they were treasonable in preaching Jesus as King. The first charge sounded ludicrously untrue : though there had been riots in many places it was the Jews and not the Christians who were responsible. Yet the words contained a prophetic truth that the speakers had no idea of, for Christianity did in time turn the Roman Empire upside down and changed the whole standard

- 8 Jesus. And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these  
9 things. And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.  
10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who when they were come thither went into the

of values; and in every place where Christianity goes it works a revolution of ideas in establishing the new and better order of things. The second charge was a mere quibble of words. Every one knew that divine beings, especially among Eastern nations, were given the title of king, and no one supposed that any treason was intended against the Roman Emperor, although in the Greek language he bore the title of king. Such charges as these caused a great commotion, but the politarchs estimated them at their real worth and refused to take steps to arrest the apostles. They simply bound over Jason and the other converts who had been arrested, presumably threatening them with severe penalties if any further trouble occurred. This necessitated the immediate departure of St. Paul, and although he desired very much to return he was hindered from doing so by the knowledge that it would bring trouble upon Jason. That is what he meant in 1 Thess. ii. 18 when he said, 'We would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us.'

10-15. While the riot had been going on at Thessalonica, Paul and Silas were in hiding, for the

synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these

Jews had not been able to find them in Jason's house. As soon as the decision of the magistrates had been given, although it was no condemnation of Christianity, yet for Jason's sake it was necessary to depart, and Paul and Silas were sent off by night by the Christians and they came to Berœa. There the Jews appear not to have been at all antagonistic, but searched the Old Testament Scriptures to see whether St. Paul's messianic teaching was correct. The result was a number of converts from among the Jews as well as from the Gentiles. The work was however cut short by Jews who came from Thessalonica and stirred up trouble. On this occasion St. Paul went on alone, leaving Silas and Timothy to follow after as soon as they saw how things went. In the Acts we hear next of Silas and Timothy in xviii. 5 when they rejoined St. Paul at Corinth. But we are able to learn something of their movements in the interval from 1 Thess. iii. 2 which says that St. Paul sent Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica. Probably both Timothy and Silas obeyed their instructions (Acts xvii. 15) and followed St. Paul to Athens. Then St. Paul, anxious to know how his Macedonian converts were faring, sent Timothy to Thessalonica, and probably sent Silas to some other part of Macedonia. By the time they returned from their missions St. Paul had removed to Corinth where they found

12 things were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honourable estate, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Beroea also, they came thither likewise, stirring up

him (Acts xviii. 5). They were both with him when he wrote the epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1).

12. **Of the Greek women of honourable estate, and of men, not a few.** In verse 4 we had been told of a number of converts among the principal women at Thessalonica. The number of Christians from the upper classes at first was small, so that it seemed worthy of mention when a few such were converted. Celsus, the opponent of Christianity in the third century could still speak contemptuously of Christians as 'workers in wool and leather, fullers and cobblers, people entirely uneducated and unpolished.'<sup>1</sup> It need cause us no surprise that the gospel should take the same course in India, so that a large proportion of the Christians are from the lower classes. It was not long before Christianity reached every class in the Roman Empire, and the same will assuredly be the case in India also. The higher classes have more traditions to fight against when they accept the new faith; but error and half-truth is bound in time to give way before the fuller light. It is not surprising

<sup>1</sup> Origen, *Adv. Celsum*, III. lv.

and troubling the multitudes. And then <sup>14</sup>  
immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to  
go as far as to the sea : and Silas and Timothy  
abode there still. But they that conducted <sup>15</sup>  
Paul brought him as far as Athens : and  
receiving a commandment unto Silas and  
Timothy that they should come to him with all  
speed, they departed.

that Christianity has a special appeal to women, for it gives woman that place of dignity which men have consistently throughout history attempted to deny her. Dr. Verrall is quoted <sup>1</sup> as saying that the radical disease of which, more than anything else, ancient civilization perished was an imperfect ideal of women. From the earliest times women attained a prominence in Christianity which they had not had in the non-Christian world. Christianity broke down the barriers of sex as well as the barriers of nationality. But the actual working out in practice of equality of sex has been left to modern times, so that even in the Christian West it is only in this generation that the spiritual equality of women is beginning to be recognized. Even there women are still for the most part debarred from prominent spiritual offices. Origen, with his usual insight, was able to write as follows,<sup>2</sup> 'Though many judges in

<sup>1</sup> Glover, *Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, i, p. 353.

- 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him, as he

Israel are said to have been men, none is mentioned as a prophet save Deborah. This very fact affords great comfort to the female sex and incites them not to despair by any means of being capable of prophetic grace, despite the weakness of their sex ; they are to understand and believe that purity of mind, not difference of sex, wins this grace.'

16-34. Many Indians, whether Christian or Hindu, will readily understand the feelings of St. Paul as he first visited Athens. From childhood they have heard the name of Benares, the city sacred to so many generations of Hindus, watered by the holy river, visited by crores of pilgrims ; and then perhaps in middle age they have at last had an opportunity of themselves visiting the city, and they have seen the dirt and squalor, the hypocrisy of most of the *sadhus* and of those in charge of the temples. St. Paul from childhood had heard the fame of Athenian philosophers. A pious Jew, abhorring the idolatry of popular Greek religion, he had heard how the philosophers had risen above that popular superstition, and, although they had not accepted the religion of the holy God of the Old Testament, their philosophy had won the respect even of the Jews. Now at length he stood in the city of the philosophers, walked its streets and visited its temples ; and behold, the philosophy of its great men had proved itself powerless against the popular religion ; the city was more given over to idolatry than any other city he had

beheld the city full of idols. So he reasoned **17**  
in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout

ever seen. No wonder that his spirit was provoked within him. The root mistake that the philosophers made was to suppose that knowledge was the way of salvation. The springs of human conduct lie much deeper than mere knowledge, so that with all their learning they were not able to influence the religion of the masses. Sadhu Sundar Singh said once, 'I met a Hindu *sannyasi* who said, "*Jnana-marga* is necessary for salvation." I told him that in order to quench thirst it is necessary to have water, it is not necessary to know that it is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Some Hindu *sannyasis* are very learned men, but they have no peace.' <sup>1</sup> Even in Athens, St. Paul preached first to the Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue, but also in true Athenian style, argued with those who met with him in the market place. Among them were philosophers of the Epicurean and Stoic schools. Like all the other Athenians they were interested to hear about the latest religion from the East and yet treated it with amused scorn, calling St. Paul a plagiarist who had picked up some tags of philosophy which he was retailing as his own system (that is the force of the word translated 'babbler' in verse 18). Others thought he had simply brought in more names of deities to add to the Greek pantheon. But mingled with their scorn of the teaching that St. Paul was giving was an angry reluctance to allow

<sup>1</sup> Streeter, *The Sadhu*, p. 180.



persons, and in the marketplace every day with

such an outsider to become an authorized teacher in Athens. They therefore dragged St. Paul before the Council of the Areopagus which had certain powers of appointing or inviting lecturers. With the Council who were to decide the case there was also a large audience of Athenians, the people described in verse 21, who were simply attracted there by the chance of hearing something new and smart. It was in the midst of such an audience that St. Paul stood up to preach. For Jewish hearers he had been able to speak at once of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But for this audience he was obliged to set forth the fundamental facts of the nature of God and the moral demands that God makes on mankind. He began by complimenting his audience on their interest in religion. The word translated 'superstitious' in verse 22 indicates rather an interest in religion without saying whether the religion was good or bad. As an example of this interest he mentioned an altar he had seen in the Athens ascribed to 'Unknown God.' It seems that such altars were erected in thankfulness for a blessing conferred when the devotee did not know to which of the gods he owed his benefit. Thus an altar recently discovered at Pergamum in Asia Minor bore the inscription 'To unknown Gods, Capito torchbearer.' The man who erected the altar in Athens probably believed, like Capito the torchbearer, in many gods, but St. Paul quoted the inscription, not as showing a feeling after the One true God, but as showing a sense of ignorance about the

them that met with him. And certain also of 18

deity. Then he proceeded to tell of the one supreme God, creator of all things, giver of life, who intended His creatures to seek and find Him, in whom indeed our life exists. From such a lofty conception of God he turned to rebuke the unworthy conceptions which find expression in idolatry; and made an appeal to repentance in view of the future judgment of the world. He spoke of the resurrection from the dead as the proof of God's approval of Jesus, the aspect in which the resurrection seems to have been chiefly regarded in the earliest days of the Church. The mention of the resurrection was the signal for an outburst of derisive laughter from the crowd, though some were polite enough to express a desire to hear him again at a later time. St. Paul walked out of the Council disillusioned of any hopes he had previously set on philosophy. The philosophers, even more than ordinary men, were incapable of discerning between right and wrong, between worthy and unworthy conceptions of God. When, soon afterwards, St. Paul reached Corinth he had resolved no more to seek to express the faith in terms of philosophy, but to preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ the crucified (1 Cor. ii. 1, 2). His sermon however had not been altogether unfruitful, for a few of the audience followed him to hear more, and the names of two of them, Dionysius and Damaris, are recorded, who afterwards looked back to that sermon as their first hearing of the gospel.

18. He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange

the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he  
19 preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him, and brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee?  
20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these  
21 things mean. (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some  
22 new thing.) And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said,

gods; because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. The name 'Jesus' would sound to the Greeks much like the name of the goddess of healing.<sup>1</sup> The Greek word for resurrection, 'Anastasis,' would have but little meaning for them, and it was natural for them to think that both were names of new gods which might be added to the many that were already worshipped. If that had been the whole content of Christianity, there would have been no difficulty for the Greeks in accepting it. No moral change would have been necessary for the addition of new deities

<sup>1</sup> *Ἰασις* (or in Ionic dialect *Ἰησις*), and *Ἰασώ* (Ionic *Ἰησώ*).

Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious. For as I <sup>23</sup> passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you. The God that made the world and all <sup>24</sup> things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands, as <sup>25</sup> though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

to the pantheon. It is said that Tiberius Cæsar proposed to put a statue of Christ in the pantheon at Rome. There is a danger that Hindus may desire to adopt Christ in the same way and lower Him to the level of their gods, and Christians should avoid any action (such as making a shrine for Christ after the fashion of Hindu shrines <sup>1</sup>) which would encourage the Hindus in such an attitude. Some one else has described the same frame of mind as follows: <sup>2</sup> 'The work of the Christian missionary is not to call men from the heathen temple into the Church of God, but to trim the dimly glowing lamp of God in the heathen temple, and to pour into it a few drops of the oil of

<sup>1</sup> For an actual attempt of this kind see *The Guardian* (Calcutta), for April 3, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted and refuted in Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's and Ours*, pp. 98, 99.

**26** and he made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having

Christian doctrine till it shines with a new radiance.' Put thus plainly the infidelity to Christ of such a method of approach is clearly seen; and we need to be on our guard against the adoption of such a compromise with any non-Christian religion.

**26. He made of one every nation of men.** The Bezan text adds the word 'blood,' making it read, 'He made of one blood every nation of men.' The idea would then be the common nature or common life pervading all mankind. But the true text has an even wider significance, mankind has not only one nature but one origin. The Athenians used to boast that as natives of the land, *αὐτόχθονες*, they were superior by origin to others who were immigrants from abroad. St. Paul's words were directed against such ideas. Equally they negative the Hindu belief of a fourfold origin of mankind:—

'When they divided Purusha, how many portions did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya (i.e. the Kshatriya caste) made.

His thighs became the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śudra was produced.' <sup>1</sup>

Such a belief in racial superiority is not peculiar to the ancient Athenians and the Brahmins. It has

<sup>1</sup> *Rig Veda*, x. 90.

determined *their* appointed seasons, and the

been a common failing ; and probably no race erred more in that direction than the Jews, many of whom at one time believed that they, as God's 'chosen people' held the position of God's spiritual favourites. Max Müller, writing in 1861 before the abolition of slavery in America, said, 'In America comparative philologists have been encouraged to prove the impossibility of a common origin of languages and races, in order to justify, by scientific arguments, the unhallowed theory of slavery. Never do I remember to have seen science more degraded than on the title-page of an American publication in which, among the profiles of the different races of man, the profile of the ape was made to look more human than that of the negro.'<sup>1</sup> Christianity does not of course say that all men are equal : there are differences of inherited physical powers and differences of mental talents. But Christianity does assert that we are all children of one Father, and all capable of direct access to Him. The highest spiritual privilege—entry into the Holy of Holies of His presence—is given to all. Nothing less than the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God provides a sufficiently strong motive to break down the walls and barriers that separate classes and castes of men. The followers of Chaitanya made a determined effort to root out the evils of caste from the land. Their effort 'has gone the way of all protestant movements in Hinduism.

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on the Science of Language* (First Series), p. 12.

**27** bounds of their habitation ; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each

It had no inner power by which to break and dissolve the ancient order, and it succumbed.<sup>1</sup>

**27. That they should seek God.** The Greek Mystery Religions made a special point of trying to bring the devotee into communion with God, or even as they said, to become God. Thus one writer said, 'This is the good end for those who have knowledge, to become God ;' and a prayer used in one of the mystic cults said, 'Come to me Hermes, as children come into the womb of women. . . . I know thee Hermes, and thou knowest me. I am thou, and thou art I.'<sup>2</sup> In this there was a real seeking after God, but also that confusion between Creator and creature which is always present in pantheism. There is all the difference in the world between being by nature one and the same as God, and becoming divine. St. Paul may have been influenced by Greek Mystery Religions, but he was always very careful to avoid any suspicion of pantheism. For this reason he avoided saying that Christians become God or become Christ, preferring always the expression 'to be in Christ' in which Christ always retains the position of 'Lord.' The sentence used here in verse 28 'for in Him we live and move and have our being,' if it stood alone, might have been capable of being

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, *The Chaitanya Movement*, pp. 58f. and 225.

<sup>2</sup> Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, pp. 113, 114.



one of us : for in him we live, and move, and **28**  
have our being ; as certain even of your own  
poets have said, For we are also his offspring.  
Being then the offspring of God, we ought not **29**

misunderstood in a pantheistic sense, but St. Paul had sufficiently guarded against that error by his insistence on the Creatorship of God in verse 24. In view of that, it is clear that the sentence in verse 28 was only meant to express the fact of God's nearness to us, and the quotation (from Aratus, a Cilician poet, and also with a slight variation from Cleanthes, the Stoic poet of Mysia) was introduced to support the same fact.

**29, 30. Idolatry.** In these verses St. Paul speaks firmly but courteously against the use of idols in worship. Curiously enough he uses the same expression 'times of ignorance' for the former days when images were used in worship as we find in Muhammadanism for the pre-Islamic period (*aiyām-i-jāhiliyat*). Christians, Jews and Mussalmans have with united voice spoken with impatient scorn of idolatry. From the time of some of the Old Testament prophets right down to the present day the attack on idolatry has been so bitter that the reason for the attitude adopted has often been concealed by the intensity of the hatred of idolatry. Now assuming that there is a really strong case against the use of idols, it seems a pity not to set down the arguments plainly and dispassionately. For acute sarcasm such as we find in Second Isaiah, while holding up idolatry to the ridicule of those who do not practise it, probably has

to think that the Godhead is like unto gold,

but rarely succeeded in winning people to better modes of worship. The explanation of the attitude adopted by the Jewish prophets is not hard to find. The Jews had themselves been terribly addicted to idolatry, and when they were delivered from that sin they fell, as often occurs, into another sin, the sin of spiritual pride. Consequently, instead of trying to understand their idolatrous neighbours, they laughed them to scorn. Christians have carried over the same attitude from Judaism. It is very easy to treat idolatry with scorn, for the great multitude of idolators, whether in India or elsewhere, are ignorant people who really believe that the block of stone or wood is a god, instinct with power, and worthy of reverence. But if we enter into argument about idolatry we shall not be answered by the rank and file of the ignorant idolators, but by the more spiritually-minded upholders of the system. It is therefore necessary to try to understand the workings of the minds of these people, who are more intellectual, and not devoid of spirituality. We must recognize the longing of the human soul to clothe in outward form his conceptions of the Unseen, and then ask how far and in what ways such a method achieves its object of bringing the soul into touch with the Unseen.

Take first the use by the Jews of the Ark of the Covenant. There are two possibilities as to its earliest use: either it was regarded as the throne on which the invisible God was seated, or it was a symbol, itself indicating the presence of God. In the

or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of

olden days the Israelites took the Ark into battle in order to ensure the presence of God; and on one occasion when the Ark was brought, the Philistine enemies were dismayed and cried out, 'God has come into the camp.' The use of the Ark was clearly capable of a higher and of a lower interpretation. At the lowest it localized God into a single place in the world, giving a conception of a localized, and therefore a limited, power and activity. At the highest it expressed the truth that God's form could not be displayed by any material object, but still localized Him as present above the Ark supported upon the wings of the attendant Cherubim. The contrast between even the lowest of these interpretations, and the Canaanite use of idols, was clear enough. But even the highest interpretation comes under the condemnation of the prophet who wrote Isa. lxvi. 1, 'Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool where is the house that ye will build me? and where is the sanctuary that shall be my resting place?'<sup>1</sup>

Take secondly the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Eucharist. All Christians believe that the person of Jesus Christ, walking in Galilee, was a complete representation of Almighty God. Most Christians also believe that in the Holy Eucharist, when we receive the communion of the consecrated bread and wine, we are receiving the very person of Jesus Christ, and are thereby united with

<sup>1</sup> For this verse, see *Early Judaism*, pp. 100f.

30 man. The times of ignorance therefore God

God Himself. In such ways as these Christians admit that outward and visible things can be the vehicles for drawing near to God and for union with Him. Indeed the sacramental life, as understood by the Great Church, means a spiritual life ministered to through the medium of outward and visible signs and symbols.

We are obliged then to recognize that the human soul longs (and longs rightly) to picture to itself what God is like ; and to have some means, appropriate to the conditions of our present material and bodily life, by which man may draw near to God. And we are bound to recognize that the use of images of God has been taken up for this very purpose, and that the stories of *avatars* of Hindu deities were conceived by the longing to have a God whom human senses could feel and hear and handle.

It is not till we have admitted the high purpose behind these things that we are in a position to criticize the particular method by which the idol-worshipper has attempted to attain his purpose.

What then is the Christian objection to idolatry ?

(1) Is it that the worshipper actually supposes that the wood or stone constitute his God ? The whole of the Second Isaiah's attack on idolatry is based on this idea, that the idol is wood, metal or stone, and nothing else, and that the worshipper thinks he can be helped by such lifeless things. This apparently is the idea of great masses of idol-worshippers in India, and for it they were condemned,

overlooked ; but now he commandeth men that

for instance, by Tukaram, in the seventeenth century, himself an idolator: ' Why do they worship stone and brass and the eight metals ? The wretches have no faith. 'Tis faith that moves us, and is fitly called the means of salvation.' <sup>1</sup> Namdev, another Marathi poet, three centuries earlier, who himself never entirely gave up idolatry said, ' They are fools lost to anything good who worship gods of stone : those who say and those who believe that a god made of stone speaks to his devotee are both stupid.' <sup>2</sup> It is therefore necessary to distinguish between idolatry as commonly practised and idolatry as practised by spiritually-minded leaders. We read in the Old Testament that Jacob called a stone the ' House of God ' ; he seems to have thought that a deity dwelt within it ; and he poured oil on it. But he was not ' bowing down to a stone.' In Hinduism an idol has to be consecrated before it is an object of worship. At the *Durga Puja* they pray the goddess to enter into the idol, and then worship it for the duration of the festival. At the end of the festival they pray the goddess to depart from it. The idol is then merely a piece of worthless plaster, and is tossed into the river. This shows that it is not the material substance that they regard as an object of worship. It is something else that they are worshipping, something which only

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Fraser and Edwards, *Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Fraser and Edwards, *op. cit* , p. 39.

31 they should all everywhere repent : inasmuch

comes when the idol is consecrated—though of course we believe them to be mistaken in thinking that something else is there. It must however be admitted that it is extremely difficult to remain in the philosophic conception that the idol represents God but is not God. Probably most of the ignorant Hindus actually believe that the idols are gods. It has been well said that 'The mind is so constituted that it cannot separate in worship the image from the object it represents, and the image itself becomes a god and receives the worship.'<sup>1</sup> Chaitanya had a *śalagrām*, a dark coloured stone used by Vaishnavas as an emblem of Krishna, which he had used for years, bathing it, feeding it, and bedewing it with tears. In sending this emblem as a present to a disciple he said, 'It is the body of Krishna; serve it with zeal.'<sup>2</sup> Even a man like Ramakrishna, who was trying hard to get into spiritual communion with God, used his idol in such a way that he thought of it as a human being. Swami Vivekananda wrote of him as follows: 'He now began to look upon the image of the goddess Kali as his mother and the mother of the universe. He believed it to be living and breathing and taking food out of his hand. After the regular forms of worship he would sit there for hours and hours, singing hymns and talking and praying to her as a child to his

<sup>1</sup> G. R. Navalkar, quoted in Fraser and Edwards, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, *The Chaitanya Movement*, p. 114.

as he hath appointed a day, in the which he

mother, till he lost all consciousness of the outward world. Sometimes he would weep for hours, and would not be comforted, because he could not see his mother as perfectly as he wished.' 'His whole soul, as it were, melted into one flood of tears, and he appealed to the goddess to have mercy on him and reveal herself to him. No mother ever shed such burning tears over the deathbed of her only child. Crowds assembled round him and tried to console him, when the blowing of the conch-shells proclaimed the death of another day, and he gave vent to his sorrow, saying, "Mother, oh my mother, another day has gone, and still I have not found thee."'<sup>1</sup> Thus the method of attack against idolatry that is as old as Second Isaiah and almost as modern as the present day, that 'the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone' fails completely, because those who write in defence of idolatry imagine that they are doing something very different, and would not dream of doing *puja* to what they believed to be mere wood and stone.

(2) Is the Christian objection to idolatry that there is something inherently wrong in trying to depict the Deity? We Christians certainly have pictures, stained-glass windows, and even images representing Christ and God.

(3) Is it that it is unworthy to express God in animal forms—the monkey, the bull, the elephant?

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller : *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, pp. 36, 38.



will judge the world in righteousness by the

Then what of the fish that the early Christians used to represent Christ, and the dove that is used to represent the Holy Spirit?

(4) Is it because so many idols are ugly? Not exactly, for a great deal of Christian art has nothing to boast about.

(5) *It is* that the limitless God is limited, that the infinite God who wills to be ever revealing Himself is stereotyped. Take a single example: it is said that the sculptor who designed the image of Jaggannath deliberately gave it no arms to indicate that it was impossible to portray the deity in material stone. If the story is true, that was a lofty idea. But what has been the result? Not that the worshippers of Jaggannath have an exceptionally exalted and spiritual idea of their god, but that they have a god limited to one spot and stereotyped in a form of exceptional ugliness. The original artist of an idol may have been a religious genius, and with skill of chisel have impressed some of his notions on the image he carved. And there it stands still, revealing nothing further, the sharp edges gradually wearing away in course of years, a stereotyped God. The two errors (*a*) localizing God in one place, and (*b*) trying to show forth the nature of God by a material form, though apparently distinct, are in reality parts of one primal error—limiting the Infinite. That is the real condemnation of idolatry, that God who is ever revealing Himself should be localized in one spot, limited and stereotyped to that meagre conception of

man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath

Him which such and such a man in such and such a year conceived Him to be. Idolatry is so easy, especially the most material and external idolatry, and spiritual religion needs so much effort, that there is always a tendency for people to slip into the easier and lower way. Fraser and Edwards say,<sup>1</sup> ' It must be regarded as one of the saddest aspects of the popular Hinduism of Maharashtra, that there are millions of Marathi-speaking Hindus who, forgetting the lofty principles of the saint of Dehu (Tukaram), follow only the idolatrous part of his example, namely, his worship of the idol Vithoba at Pandharpur, while those who follow the nobler part of his example, namely, his earnest quest for inward purity revealed in many of his *abhangs*, are probably to be counted only by thousands, possibly hundreds.' It is true that a stereotyping of the revelation of God finds expression occasionally in the Christian Church. Thus from time to time we find the Bible treated superstitiously as a full and perfect revelation of God (like the Jews treated the Torah, and the Moslems treat the Quran) instead of being treated as the Book which contains the record of the living Christ, who is the only perfect revelation of God. In so far as any written words are thought to be a complete revelation of God there is something of the nature of idolatry, not indeed as narrow as the idolatry of images, but truly idolatry, if it is supposed that any written words can

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 153.

given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

fully express all that is to be known about God. Again there is no doubt that for many of the more ignorant Roman Catholic Christians reverence of images approaching idolatry has actually found a place in Christian worship. For true Christians there is only one perfect image of God, and that is the living person of Jesus Christ. To worship Him is not idolatry, because the more we know Him the more we learn about God. Although incarnate, He is not limited to one spot. He gradually reveals Himself to us, and the revelation of God through Him is ever growing, never stereotyped. Similarly the symbolism of receiving bread and wine to represent the ever-renewed fellowship with God is not a stereotyped symbol; for we do not say that God is like bread and wine, but that the common meal symbolizes the united reception of God by the Christians and the growing fellowship between the various members of the Christian body.

The part played by idolatry in staying the evolution of religion in ancient Greece and Rome is well described by Froude. God had been gradually revealing Himself to the peoples of those lands 'by many portions and in many manners.' But then idolatry stepped in to stereotype the older and more primitive conceptions and effectively prevented the admission of new revelation into the minds and hearts of the people. Froude says,<sup>1</sup> 'Thus paganism, in its

<sup>1</sup> Essay on the Book of Job, *Westminster Review*, 1853.

Now when they heard of the resurrection of <sup>32</sup> the dead, some mocked ; but others said, We

very nature, was expansive, self-developing, and, as Mr. Hume observed, tolerant ; a new god was welcomed to the Pantheon as a new scientific discovery is welcomed by the Royal Society ; and the various nations found no difficulty in interchanging their divinities—a new god either representing a new power not hitherto discovered, or one with which they were already familiar under a new name. With such a power of adaptation and enlargement, if there had been nothing more in it than this, such a system might have gone on accommodating itself to the change of times, and keeping pace with the growth of human character. Already in its later forms, as the unity of nature was more closely observed, and the identity of it throughout the known world, the separate powers were subordinating themselves to a single supreme king ; and, as the poets had originally personified the elemental forces, the thinkers were reversing the earlier process, and discovering the law under the person. Happily or unhappily, however, what they could do for themselves they could not do for the multitude. Phoebus and Aphrodite had been made too human to be allegorized. Humanized, and yet, we may say, only half-humanized, retaining their purely physical nature, and without any proper moral attribute at all, these gods and goddesses remained, to the many, examples of sensuality made beautiful ; and, as soon as right and wrong came to have a meaning, it was impossible to worship any more these

33 will hear thee concerning this yet again. Thus

idealized despisers of it. The human caprices and passions which served at first to deepen the illusion, justly avenged themselves. Paganism became a lie, and perished.' We see here that according to Froude pagan idolatry could not continue to exist in the face of moral ideas of right and wrong. It has been observed in many countries that immorality is closely connected with idolatry. The Old Testament in many places bears witness to this connexion in the Canaanite 'high places' and in the Israelite 'high-places' modelled on those of the Canaanites. St. Paul is witness of the same in the Gentile world of his day: 'they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions,' (Rom. i 25, 26). Evidence for the same connexion could also be found in India. 'By their fruits ye shall know them' remains a true proverb, and it is no doubt the frequent association of immorality with idolatry which has roused many people to the serious danger of idolatry; and it is no doubt, as Froude says, the moral sense of right and wrong which will bring Indian idolatry to an end. Our part is to help people to choose between what is morally right and wrong, and the old order, associated with what is morally inferior, will vanish of its own accord.

In popular usage the terms 'idolatry' and 'heathenism' are interchangeable, as if false ideas of God,

Paul went out from among them. But certain 34  
men clave unto him, and believed : among  
whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and

and false methods of worshipping God, were one and the same thing. Although strictly speaking they are different, yet it is true that low and wrong conceptions of God are naturally associated with low and wrong kinds of worship. Whenever idolatry, or anything approaching idolatry, has entered into the Christian Church it has been the result of erroneous ideas of God. And conversely we are certain that when India has accepted the gospel of Christ, and the Christian conception of God, idolatry will have vanished from the land, and the days of idolatry will be spoken of by all, as they were by St. Paul, as ' the days of ignorance.'

30-31. The conclusion of St. Paul's sermon with a warning to repentance must have sounded strange in the ears of the philosophers. They were content to think out the truth without feeling the religious impulse to work that truth out in life ; above all they were content to leave the masses of the people to continue practising the outworn superstitions of Greek religion. This is a common failing of intellectually minded people. A good example is Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the most learned man of his time, who, though he was faithful in the performance of his religious duties as a good Mohammedan, yet left behind him a testamentary tractate defending dissimulation as to the religion of the country in which we might be, and saying that it was not wrong for the

a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

philosopher to go through religious rites which for him had no meaning.<sup>1</sup>

**The Epistles to the Thessalonians.** St. Paul in writing his first epistle to the Thessalonians said (iii. 1, 2) that when he was at Athens he thought it good to be left behind alone, and sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Acts xviii. 5 says that Silas and Timothy rejoined St. Paul at Corinth. It is therefore as certain as can be that 1 Thessalonians which is written in the name of Paul and Silvanus (a longer form of Silas) and Timothy, was written from Corinth by St. Paul after Silas and Timothy had rejoined him there. The good news that Timothy brought of the faith of the Thessalonian converts (1 Thess. iii. 6) gave great joy to St. Paul, and colours the whole letter. The occasion of 2 Thessalonians is not quite so definite; but seeing that it was also written in the name of Paul and Silvanus and Timothy it is probable that it was sent from Corinth shortly after the first epistle. The Second Coming of our Lord is very prominent in these epistles. It appears that not only the Thessalonian Christians, but St. Paul himself, expected the Second Coming within the life-time of many then living. This view seems to have been common in the earliest days of the Church, but to have been modified by the lapse of time and by a better understanding of our Lord's teaching on the subject.

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, *Muslim Theology, etc.*, p. 198.



After these things he departed from Athens, <sup>181</sup> and came to Corinth. And he found a certain <sup>2</sup> Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome : and he came unto them ; and because he was of the same trade, he <sup>3</sup> abode with them, and they wrought ; for by

1-11. When St. Paul reached Athens from Corinth he lodged with certain Jews named Aquila and Priscilla. Whether these were already Christians, or were converted by St. Paul, we are not told, but they appear as Christians soon afterwards (verse 26). The reason for their departure from Rome was an edict of the Emperor Claudius that all Jews should leave Rome on account of tumults raised through the instigation of Chrestus. It is most probable that these were riots among the Jews in Rome on account of Christianity, and that when the Roman authorities asked the cause, they were told it was 'Christus', thus leading the historian Suetonius to think that 'Chrestus' was the name of the leader of the riots. Claudius showed a more favourable policy towards the Jews than his predecessor Caius Caligula had done, being influenced by affection and gratitude towards Agrippa II who had rendered him useful service on his accession to power. It is therefore surprising to read that Claudius took such drastic action against the Jews in Rome. The edict of banishment was probably issued during Agrippa's

4 their trade they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was  
6 the Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I am clean: from

absence from Rome, which was from A.D. 50 to 52 while the feeble Claudius was under other influence. Dion Cassius modifies the statement of Suetonius by expressing the difficulty felt in enforcing the edict on account of the large numbers affected by it, and explains that these were not actually expelled from the city, but that the regulations concerning them were made more strict, and especially that assemblies, whether for public worship or for other purposes were prohibited.<sup>1</sup> But whether Aquila and Priscilla were actually expelled or whether they left Rome because things were made too uncomfortable for them, they came to Corinth, and St. Paul joined with them in tent-making. There are numerous references to St. Paul's engaging in this handicraft, so as to be independent of his converts. But he received gifts from them also from time to time, as from Philippi

<sup>1</sup> See Septimus Buss, *Roman Law and History in the New Testament*, p. 250.

henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And <sup>7</sup> he departed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the ruler of the <sup>8</sup> synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. And the Lord <sup>9</sup> said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for <sup>10</sup> I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this

(Phil. iv. 10-18). It is often thought that at a later time he must have come into some money, perhaps through the death of his father, or else he would not have had the means to support an appeal to Cæsar. The course of the evangelism of Corinth followed the same lines as elsewhere. St. Paul preached first to the Jews, proving that the Messiah was Jesus, but when they become obdurate and spoke evil of Jesus he left the synagogue and worked among the Gentiles, lodging in the house of a God-fearer Titius Justus. St. Paul was encouraged by a vision to continue this work, and consequently remained for a year and a half. We learn from 1 Cor. i. 14 that St. Paul baptized with his own hands Crispus and Gaius, and from Rom. xvi. 23 that he was lodging at that time in the house of Gaius. Crispus is here mentioned as the ruler of the synagogue. Bartlet suggests that

- 11 city. And he dwelt *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
- 12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgement-seat,
- 13 saying, This man persuadeth men to worship

Gaius might be the personal name of Titius Justus. In any case we are to suppose that St. Paul chose to stay with Titius Justus, next-door to the synagogue, for convenience of receiving visitors and holding Christian services. It must be remembered that for a long time the Christians had no buildings specially set apart as churches. There is no evidence for the existence of churches till the reign of Commodus towards the end of the second century. The oldest definite church building that we know of is the church of Edessa which was destroyed by a flood in A.D. 201.<sup>1</sup>

12-17. Gallio was brother of the philosopher Seneca. From A.D. 15-44 Achaia had been part of the Imperial Province of Macedonia, and had consequently been under a legate or proprætor. But from A.D. 44 it became a Senatorial Province once more, governed by a proconsul, a fact which again shows the careful accuracy of St. Luke. A recently discovered inscription, although in a bad state of

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of the Church*, ii, pp. 85, 86

God contrary to the law. But when Paul was 14  
about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the  
Jews, If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of  
wicked villany, O ye Jews, reason would that  
I should bear with you : but if they are ques- 15  
tions about words and names and your own  
law, look to it yourselves ; I am not minded to  
be a judge of these matters. And he drave 16

preservation, seems to fix the date of Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia as A.D. 51-52.<sup>1</sup> It was during this period then that the Jews brought St. Paul before the proconsular judgment seat and accused him of teaching people to worship God contrary to the law. The point of the accusation apparently was that Roman law allowed Judaism as a 'permitted religion,' but, as St. Paul was teaching something which was not real Judaism, the religion he taught was not a 'permitted religion.' This argument was exceedingly subtle, and before a lawyer who quibbled with words might have carried weight. But Gallio was a man of action, and had no mind to become a judge of what constituted heresy in Judaism, and so he dismissed the case with impatience. Thereupon a curious incident occurred, which we are not able to explain for lack of information. They all beat Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue. The most obvious explanation is that the Greeks present were so angry with the Jews for

<sup>1</sup> Preuschen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, ad loc.

- 17 them from the judgement-seat. And they all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgement-seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.
- 18 And Paul, having tarried after this yet many days, took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchreæ:

bringing their petty concerns before the court that they caught Sosthenes, the leader of the Jews and gave him a beating, and that Gallio, thinking this a well-deserved punishment, refused to interfere. Another suggestion is that the Jews beat their own leader for mismanaging their case. Others think that this Sosthenes is the same as the Sosthenes of 1 Corinthians and that the Jews knew that he was already half a Christian and therefore took vengeance on him. It is however, scarcely likely that Gallio, after dismissing the plaintiffs would have allowed them to beat one of their opponents. The ambiguity was felt in ancient times: the Bezan text, followed by the mass of later manuscripts, adds the words 'the Greeks' after 'all'; a few manuscripts add 'the Jews.'

18-23. The case before Gallio having been dismissed, St. Paul was able to continue in Corinth. When the time came for his departure he was accompanied as far as Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla. At Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth, he cut his hair in completion of some private vow that he had made.

for he had a vow. And they came to Ephesus, 19 and he left them there : but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And when they asked him to abide a 20 longer time, he consented not ; but taking his 21 leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus.

Grammatically the sentence 'having shorn his head in Cenchreæ' goes more easily with Aquila ; but St. Luke never seems to put in unnecessary information. It would be nothing surprising if Aquila, recently converted from Judaism, had performed such a vow, but for St. Paul to have performed it is an interesting piece of information showing his attitude towards Jewish observances. At Ephesus he only spent a short time, taking the opportunity of speaking in the synagogue, and then hurried on to catch the ship sailing for Syria. After the word 'saying' in verse 21 the Bezan text continues 'I must by all means keep the coming feast at Jerusalem, and I will return again to you if God will.' These words are probably original, and were omitted in our best manuscripts under the supposition that St. Paul did not visit Jerusalem. There was a curious error current as early as the beginning of the fifth century that the Antioch mentioned in verse 22 was Pisidian Antioch. If this error was current in the fourth century it may have caused the omission in our fourth century manuscripts. When St. Paul landed at Cæsarea he went up and saluted the Church.



- 22 And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the church, and went down to  
23 Antioch. And having spent some time *there*, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, stablishing all the disciples.

Some commentators think that this means the Church in Cæsarea; but it must mean Jerusalem because (1) if he had only intended to go to Antioch he would not have chosen a ship sailing to Cæsarea, and (2) if he had gone direct from Cæsarea to Antioch the journey would have been described as going 'up' and not going 'down.' Under the same error already mentioned that St. Paul did not go to Jerusalem the Bezan text in xix. 1 reads as follows, 'And when Paul wished according to his own plan to go to Jerusalem, the Spirit told him to return to Asia, and having passed through the upper country he came to Ephesus.' The true text, as we have seen, gives St. Paul's intention to visit Jerusalem in verse 21, and implies his visit to Jerusalem in verse 22, followed immediately by a visit to Antioch in Syria. The fact of his visiting Jerusalem for a feast, presumably the Passover, explains his hurried departure from Ephesus, for there was but scanty time in the Spring after the commencement of navigation to reach Jerusalem by Easter time. After a stay at Antioch St. Paul made a tour through Galatia on his way to Ephesus. In Phrygia the road to Ephesus branched into two, and he chose the more northerly, and less

Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an<sup>24</sup> Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus ; and he was mighty in the scriptures.

frequented route. St. Luke had no information to give us with regard to the work in Galatia on this occasion, or if he had information withheld it so as to give more space for the important events at Ephesus.

THE EVANGELIZATION OF ASIA, xviii. 24-xx. 38

xviii. 24-xix. 7. Many people must have come into contact with Christ during the days of His ministry, or with the forerunner John the Baptist, without following up connexion with them. Jews for instance, travelling for trade or pilgrimage, may have had but a short stay in Palestine and never have heard any accurate accounts of what happened at the end of His life. Such was Apollos, an Alexandrian, who it seems had been in sufficiently close touch with Jesus or with John the Baptist or their disciples to have been accurately instructed in ' the things concerning Jesus.' The R. V. translation ' carefully ' (verse 25) was no doubt adopted because the Revisers did not see how such teaching as Apollos had received could be accurate as far as it went, and how the instruction given by Priscilla and Aquila could be said to have supplemented it so as to make it ' more accurate ' (verse 26, R. V. ' more carefully '). It is possible that ' the things concerning Jesus ' means the life of Jesus, whom John the Baptist had pointed to as the coming Messiah. It may however mean the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament which would be

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord ; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning

described by a Christian writer as 'the things concerning Jesus,' just as our Lord in Luke xxiv. 27 spoke of such prophecies as 'the things concerning Himself.' Somewhat similar to Apollos in their position were a dozen men whom St. Paul found at Ephesus. They called themselves 'disciples,' a term restricted among Christians to disciples of Christ. It seems as if they were in reality disciples of John the Baptist. But they too like Apollos must have left Palestine before the forming of the Christian Church in Jerusalem. In order to understand the position of these disciples of John the Baptist it is necessary to go back to the teaching of their master. There are evidently two sources for the narratives about the Baptist. One is the narrative presented by St. Mark, which has been closely followed by Matthew and Luke ; the other is a source (Q) common to Matthew and Luke which supplies most of the information about his teaching. Now it appears that the sentence about baptism in the Holy Spirit comes from both sources, for while it is recorded by all three Synop- tists, Matthew and Luke are verbally identical (showing a common written source) and different from Mark. Mark has, 'I have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with Holy Spirit,' (Mark i. 8). Matthew and Luke both say, 'He shall baptize you in Holy Spirit and fire,' (Matt. iii. 11 ; Luke iii. 16). No doubt both go back to the same

Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John : and <sup>26</sup> he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him

original remark, but they have a different literary history. There is then a double strand of tradition that John the Baptist was looking forward to a baptism by the Messiah which would differ from his own baptism by being connected with a gift of the Holy Spirit. According to Acts i. 5 our Lord took up this idea, and declared that this gift of the Holy Spirit would take place shortly after His ascension, 'For John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized in Holy Spirit not many days hence.' We have seen already (in the note on ii. 38) that Christian baptism was appropriately described as incorporation into Christ and into God with manifest signs of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul asked the twelve 'disciples' whom he met at Ephesus whether they had received the Holy Spirit, no doubt meaning whether their baptism was accompanied by visible signs of the presence of the Holy Spirit. To that they replied, 'No, we did not even know (i.e. till St. Paul told them) that the Holy Spirit is given.' They knew of course that John the Baptist had looked forward to a day when the Holy Spirit would be given. But the Holy Spirit was not given at John's baptism, nor apparently at the baptism administered during our Lord's ministry by His disciples (John vii. 39). And they did not know, probably through absence from Palestine, whether the prophecy of baptism in the

- 27 the way of God more carefully. And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much which had believed  
28 through grace: for he powerfully confuted the Jews, *and that* publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Holy Spirit was yet fulfilled. So St. Paul asked them further, 'Into what then were ye baptized?' expecting the answer, 'Into Christ' or 'Into the name of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.' But they, not at all understanding that Christian baptism was an incorporation into Christ, replied, 'Into John's baptism.' Apollos's position was exactly the same. He like them knew of no baptism other than that of John. Whether or no Apollos and the twelve disciples of John had heard from him that Jesus was the coming Messiah, they had not heard that Jesus had actually been manifested as Messiah by the resurrection, and that since Pentecost Christian baptism had meant incorporation into Christ and had been accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit. When Apollos was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila he became a powerful advocate of Christianity among the Jews proving that the Messiah—of whom he had preached before—was none other than Jesus. The Greek of xviii. 28 does not say (as R. V.) 'that Jesus was the Christ,' but 'that the Christ was Jesus.' Apollos was so successful in his work at Corinth that St. Paul

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos <sup>19</sup> was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples : and he said unto them, Did <sup>2</sup> ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed ? And they *said* unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was *given*. And he said, Into what then were ye <sup>3</sup> baptized ? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism <sup>4</sup> of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come

could say of him shortly afterwards, 'I planted, Apollos watered,' (1 Cor. iii. 6). There is no mention that Apollos was rebaptized, though we may assume that that was the case. The twelve disciples were baptized and St. Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the power of prophecy and speaking with tongues, visible signs of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

8-20. The period of three months in which St. Paul was able to preach in the synagogue at Ephesus was longer than in other cities, and even when he left the synagogue it was only 'some' of the Jews who were responsible for rejecting him. He then made use of a lecture hall called the School of Tyrannus. The Bezan text is probably correct in saying that he taught 'from the fifth to the tenth hour.' The regular work of the school would only occupy the earlier hours of the day, so that the school would be unoccupied from the fifth

5 after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of 6 the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and 7 prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men.

8 And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading *as to* the things

hour onwards. Moreover most of the business of the city was done in the early hours, so that people would be free to come and listen to St. Paul after their work was over. In this way two years were spent. Adding on the three months' work in the synagogue we get a period running into three years, agreeing roughly with the statement of xx. 31. Of this long period St. Luke had no information, except the story of the discomfiture of the sons of Sceva. Yet the period must have included at least one visit to Corinth and back (see the following note on the Epistles to the Corinthians). There is a small difficulty in the story of the sons of Sceva, that in verse 14 they number seven, and in verse 16 the word 'both' implies that they were only two. The word translated 'both' was used in every-day Greek from the second century onwards in the sense of 'all', and it may bear that meaning here, though J. H. Moulton hesitates to accept it from so good a writer of Greek



concerning the kingdom of God. But when 9 some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years ; 10 so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

as St. Luke.<sup>1</sup> If it must bear the meaning of 'two' we must simply suppose that St. Luke forgot to say that only two of the seven sons were present on that occasion. These exorcists used the names of Jesus and Paul, thinking that the names themselves had a magical power apart from the personalities of Jesus and Paul. Such a notion was common in those days. If a deity was invoked with the correct formula, and especially if his name was used, he was compelled to act in accordance with the wish of the devotee. The name 'Sabaoth,' borrowed from the Jews, appears thus in many heathen magical incantations. Tulsi Das seems to have imagined that the name of Rāma was more powerful than Rama himself, as if the name of Rama were Rama in action. He said, 'By incessantly and devoutly repeating his name all the faithful may attain to felicity. Rama himself only redeemed

<sup>1</sup> See Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of New Testament Greek*, ἀμφότεροι and J. H. Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 80. In Acts xxiii. 8, the word appears to mean 'all three': 'The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor angel nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess all three.'

11 And God wrought special miracles by the  
12 hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick  
were carried away from his body handkerchiefs  
or aprons, and the diseases departed from them  
13 and the evil spirits went out. But certain also  
of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon  
them to name over them which had the evil  
spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I  
adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

one woman, the ascetic's wife, but his name has corrected the errors of millions of sinners.' A similar danger is to be guarded against in Indian Christianity. A certain Christian convert from mystic Islam believed that there must be some word, the repetition of which would ensure mystic union, and he believed that he had found such a word in the name 'Jesus'. We should be careful however not to suppose that the sounds themselves have any mysterious potency, like the supposed value of the sound 'Om'. The name of Jesus is equally potent, whether it is pronounced as it was in the original Aramaic, or in Greek, or in any modern language, because it sets our minds on that living person which bears the name. In this sense, and not in any magical sense, 'the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified' by the discomfiture of the sons of Sceva. Moreover magic was greatly discredited, so that many who had practised it came and burnt their books, valued in common estimation at 50,000 denarii, equivalent to Rs. 25,000, but now seen by their owners to be utterly valueless. With this

And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, which did this. And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled

triumph of Christianity over the insidious power of magic, marking the climax, and almost the conclusion of St. Paul's work in the lands bordering the Aegean Sea—the Provinces of Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia—St. Luke pauses again, with the words, 'So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.'

**The Epistles to the Corinthians.**—It was during St. Paul's three years' stay at Ephesus that his first epistle to the Corinthians was written, and it may be well here to pause a moment to consider the dates and occasions of the two epistles. The events which apparently took place may be summarized as follows:—

1. St. Paul sent a letter from Ephesus to Corinth, now lost, which is referred to in 1 Cor. v. 9-11. 'I wrote unto you in my letter not to have company with fornicators.'

2. St. Paul received information as to the doings in Corinth from the household of Chloe (1 Cor. i. 11), and also from Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. xvi. 17), and also a letter from the Corinthians (1 Cor. vii. 1).

3. St. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth to see if he could put matters right there, but was not certain

17 out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus 18 was magnified. Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their

whether Timothy would arrive (1 Cor. iv. 17, xvi. 10). This journey of Timothy to Corinth is probably to be identified with his journey to Macedonia in Acts xix. 22. As he was going round by Macedonia it would explain St. Paul's uncertainty whether he would reach Corinth.

4. St. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus to Corinth, and in the course of his letter spoke of his proposed visit to Corinth *via* Macedonia after Pentecost (1 Cor. xvi. 5-8).

5. Timothy rejoined St. Paul. His name is coupled with that of St. Paul in the salutation of 2 Cor. i. 1.

6. Probably owing to an unfavourable report brought by Timothy St. Paul immediately paid a flying visit from Ephesus to Corinth and back, which is referred to in 2 Cor. xii. 14 and xiii. 1, 2.

7. This visit of St. Paul was unsuccessful and from Ephesus he wrote a severe letter to the Corinthians. This letter is referred to in 2 Cor. ii. 4 and vii. 8. It is thought by many critics that part of this severe letter is to be found in 2 Cor. x-xiii, for that section is of a very severe nature, and there appears to be a distinct break between 2 Cor. ix and x.

deeds. And not a few of them that practised 19  
curious arts brought their books together, and  
burned them in the sight of all: and they  
counted the price of them, and found it fifty  
thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew 20  
the word of the Lord and prevailed.

8. Titus went to Corinth, perhaps as the bearer  
of the severe letter.

9. The riot at Ephesus occurred, Acts xix.  
23-41.

10. St. Paul left Ephesus, and went to Mace-  
donia, Acts xx. 1. When he got as far as Troas he  
expected to meet Titus returning from Corinth, and  
was bitterly disappointed in not finding him, 2 Cor.  
ii. 12, 13. But when St. Paul reached Macedonia  
Titus met him and reported that his visit to  
Corinth had been entirely successful, 2 Cor. vii.  
5-7.

11. St. Paul, full of joy at the news brought him  
by Titus, wrote the first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians,  
and sent it by the hand of Titus to Corinth,  
2 Cor. viii. 16-18, while he himself tarried a while in  
Macedonia, in connexion with the collection for the  
poor saints in Jerusalem, before he followed Titus  
to Corinth, Acts xx. 2.

The contents of the various letters to and from  
Corinth, and the difficulties St. Paul found in dealing  
with the Corinthian Christians, are dealt with in  
commentaries on the epistles. But it seemed worth  
while here to record briefly those movements of

- 21 Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must  
22 also see Rome. And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

St. Paul of which the epistles speak, supplementing the information given in Acts.<sup>1</sup>

21, 22. St. Paul, feeling now that his work in the lands bordering the Aegean sea was almost accomplished, began to make plans for the future. One thing remained to be done, of which we hear much in the epistles written at this time (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4, 2 Cor. viii, ix, Rom. xv. 26), the collection of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. This plan was very much on the heart of St. Paul, for he realized that such a gift of charity would be a great bond of unity between the Gentile and Jewish parts of the Church. For the purpose of gathering together the sums that had been collected it was necessary to pay a final visit to Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go to Jerusalem to present the offering. After that he intended to travel further afield to Rome and Spain. Of this purpose he speaks more particularly in his epistle to the Romans (xv. 19-25). In that passage

<sup>1</sup> For a full account see Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 120-75.

And about that time there arose no small **23** stir concerning the Way. For a certain man **24** named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little

he explains that he had covered the ground from Jerusalem as far as Illyricum, which bordered Macedonia on the west, and that he had made it his aim not to preach where Christ was already named. This aim he says had hindered him many times from going to Rome ; and the only conclusion we can draw from this statement is that the Church in Rome had already been founded by some other apostle. The New Testament gives us no certain information who the founder of the Church of Rome was, but there is no reason to doubt the tradition that it was St. Peter. Now however, having fully evangelized Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia, he felt no longer bound to restrict himself as before, and determined to visit Rome after taking the alms to Jerusalem. We know that he did reach Rome, but not in the way he expected ; for he went there as a prisoner. Whether his purpose of going on further to Spain was ever fulfilled we do not know. Before leaving Ephesus St. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead to Macedonia to make preparations for the collection. Timothy, as we have seen, was to go if possible to Corinth also ; and that was probably the destination of Erastus who was the Treasurer of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23, 2 Tim. iv. 20).

23-41. The great riot which ended St. Paul's stay in Ephesus was not the first trouble he had had in the



25 business unto the craftsmen ; whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this business  
26 we have our wealth. And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be

city. Although in verse 10 we read that 'all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks,' yet this hopeful outlook is somewhat modified by St. Paul's own words in 1 Cor. xvi. 9, 'a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.' It must be remembered that 1 Corinthians was written before the riot at Ephesus, so that the following words express the danger and hardships which St. Paul endured even before the riot, 'For I think God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death ; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men. . . . Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place ; and we toil, working with our own hands : being reviled we bless ; being persecuted we endure ; being defamed we entreat. We are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now ' (1 Cor. iv. 9-13). St. Luke gives us no information corresponding to such experiences in Ephesus, except retrospectively in xx. 19 where St. Paul speaks of 'trials which befell me by plots of the Jews.' Even more surprising is it

no gods, which are made with hands : and not<sup>27</sup> only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute ; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard this, they<sup>28</sup> were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying,

to read in 1 Cor. xv. 31, 32, ' I protest by that glorying in you, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me ? ' Whether these words are to be taken literally or as a metaphor of some strife with a wild mob, we have no other record of the incident, and it only serves to remind us that Acts is not, and does not profess to be, a complete record of all the doings even of St. Paul. We must not suppose that the long periods, like the years in Tarsus, the year and a half in Corinth, or these three years in Ephesus, which St. Luke compresses into a few verses, were really uneventful. The end of the stay in Ephesus was hastened by the riot, the description of which we owe to an eyewitness, Aristarchus, who was present with St. Luke at Rome during St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Col. iv. 10, 14). The occasion of the riot was opposition by Gentiles on financial grounds to the Christian propaganda. In this it was similar to the opposition at Philippi. Elsewhere the opposition always arose first from the Jews. The ground of

- 29 Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians. And the city was filled with the confusion: and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. And when Paul was minded to enter in unto the people, 30 the disciples suffered him not. And certain 31 also of the chief officers of Asia, being his friends, sent unto him, and besought him not

Demetrius's attack was St. Paul's teaching against idolatry. Jews also spoke against idolatry, but, as their proselytising resulted in nothing like the dramatic increase in number of the Christians, no one had troubled much about it. The Christian success must have been very considerable if it had really resulted as early as this in any appreciable falling off of the trade in shrines of the goddess Artemis. The temple of this goddess (called in the English versions by the name of the corresponding Roman goddess Diana) was world-famous. It contained an image of some antiquity. It may have been a meteorite which had fallen to the earth from outer space, as is suggested by verse 25, for such stones have often been the object of worship or veneration—the best known being the black stone in the Kaabah at Mecca. But other authorities than Acts do not support this origin of the image of Artemis. Although the silversmiths expressed the fear that the temple of Artemis might be brought to disrepute, it is perfectly obvious that their opposition was really on business grounds.

to adventure himself into the theatre. Some<sup>32</sup> therefore cried one thing, and some another : for the assembly was in confusion ; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. And they brought Alexander out<sup>33</sup> of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence unto the people. But when they perceived that he was a Jew,<sup>34</sup> all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

After Demetrius had addressed his fellow-craftsmen, they set up the cry 'Great Artemis of the Ephesians!' <sup>1</sup> At this cry, which was almost like the motto of the city, the citizens were filled with confusion, and gathered together in the theatre, a vast excavation in the hillside large enough to hold 24,000 people. This theatre was the place where the Ecclesia or assembly of the whole people used to meet to decide the affairs of the city. The town clerk in his speech referred to this Ecclesia, as a suitable body to discuss the complaints if they were such as could not be settled in the proconsular courts. But when it says at the end that he dismissed the Ecclesia, it reflects his conciliatory language : the body which gathered together was a mob, and not an Ecclesia duly summoned. Apparently Demetrius had not taken

<sup>1</sup> Following the Bezan text, instead of the other manuscripts which make it 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians.'

35 And when the townclerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana, and of the *image* which fell down  
36 from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and  
37 to do nothing rash. For ye have brought *hither* these men, which are neither robbers of

the precaution of laying hands on St. Paul before the uproar began; so he and his confederates had to be content with dragging two prominent Christians, Gaius and Aristarchus, into the theatre. St. Paul was not in hiding, and was desirous of facing the mob in the theatre. But he was dissuaded from risking his life not only by his fellow Christians, but also by the Asiarchs. Each Province had a man appointed over the worship of the Emperor, and it fell to this man's lot to preside over the festivities and games. We gather from this passage that Asia, being a very large Province, had more than one such ruler or Asiarch. As they were present at Ephesus at the time it has been suggested that this was the occasion of the quinquennial festival of the 'Common Council of Asia.' Such a meeting would have brought a large number of people into the city, and would make it easy to raise a riot. When the concourse had met in the theatre, the Jews began to fear that they would be implicated in the attack, and they therefore persuaded one of their number named

temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. If 38  
therefore Demetrius, and the craftsmen that  
are with him, have a matter against any man,  
the courts are open, and there are proconsuls :  
let them accuse one another. But if ye seek 39  
anything about other matters, it shall be settled  
in the regular assembly. For indeed we are 40  
in danger to be accused concerning this day's  
riot, there being no cause *for it*: and as  
touching it we shall not be able to give account  
of this concourse. And when he had thus 41  
spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Alexander to make a defence, no doubt to prove that  
Jews and Christians were very different people. To  
the eyes of the mob Jews and Christians were much  
the same, being both haters of idolatry, and the  
appearance of Alexander was only the sign for a  
greater outburst of shouting 'Great Artemis of the  
Ephesians!' Finally the disturbance was quelled by a  
conciliatory speech from the town clerk, who was a  
kind of secretary to the Ecclesia. He pointed out  
that everyone recognized the devotion of Ephesus to  
the worship of Artemis ; that there was no charge of  
temple-robbery against Gaius and Aristarchus, nor  
even of blaspheming the goddess. It is of course  
probably true that neither these men nor St. Paul had  
used words of abuse about Artemis, though their  
Christian contempt of idolatry might quite reasonably  
have been construed as blasphemy. Christians will

**201** And after the uproar was ceased, Paul having sent for the disciples and exhorted them, took leave of them, and departed for to go into

of course always, if they observe the Christian spirit, consider the feelings of those to whom they speak, and gently declare the better way rather than abuse them for their errors. The town clerk then indicated the proper lawful way of getting redress if any wrong had been committed, and warned the crowd that the Roman authorities might make enquiry into this unwarranted tumult. A curiously close parallel to this riot comes from Calcutta. When the Government of India introduced a Bill into the Legislative Assembly in 1891 to raise the age of consent from ten to twelve there was great opposition on the part of Hindus. 'Never before within living memory had Bengal been so agitated. Crowds of excited Hindus paraded the streets all day and far into the night, yelling at the pitch of their voices, "Our religion is in danger."' <sup>1</sup>

1-6. St. Paul had to leave Ephesus directly after the riot, and as we have seen he had two purposes in view, to settle the difficulties at Corinth and also to convey the money that had been collected in Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem. His feelings at this time are described in his own words in 2 Cor. i. 8-10, 'For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our

<sup>1</sup> Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 397.



Macedonia. And when he had gone through<sup>2</sup> those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece. And when<sup>3</sup> he had spent three months *there*, and a plot was laid against him by the Jews, as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to

power, insomuch that we despaired even of life; yea we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead, who delivered us out of so great a death and will deliver.' He waited a while at Troas, and found a fruitful field of labour, but was greatly troubled that Titus did not meet him there with news from Corinth (2 Cor. ii. 12-13). Eventually he sailed to Macedonia, where he met Titus (2 Cor. vii. 5-7). From there he wrote 2 Corinthians and sent the letter to Corinth by the hands of Titus and two others (2 Cor. viii. 16-24). One of these two is described as 'the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the Churches.' Tradition has it that this brother was St. Luke, and the fact that he is mentioned twice (viii. 18 and xii. 18) as 'the brother' directly after the mention of Titus makes it very probable that he was a relation, perhaps an actual brother, of Titus. With Titus and Luke was yet another messenger, simply described in 2 Cor. viii. 22 as 'our brother.' One might conjecture that this man was Timothy who was with St. Paul at the time of writing the letter, and was later with St. Paul when he left Corinth. Timothy is

4 return through Macedonia. And there accompanied him as far as Asia Sopater of Beroëa, *the son* of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, 5 Tychicus and Trophimus. But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas. 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we tarried seven days.

spoken of as 'the brother' in 2 Cor. i. 1. The two unnamed disciples are spoken of in 2 Cor. viii. 23 as 'apostles of Churches,' a description which would especially be applied to outstanding persons such as Luke and Timothy were. After St. Paul had spent some little time in Macedonia he went to Corinth, and stayed three months. At the end of that time he had planned to sail direct to Syria, but at the last moment he learnt that a plot had been made by Jews to kill him on the ship. The ship would have been full of Jewish pilgrims, and if other pilgrim ships were like the one in which Burton sailed to Medinah<sup>1</sup> one can readily understand how easy it would have been to get rid of an unwanted passenger. On learning of the plot St. Paul at once decided to change his plans, and to return to Jerusalem through Macedonia. St. Luke

<sup>1</sup> R. F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Mecca*, ch. x.

And upon the first day of the week, when<sup>7</sup> we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. And there were many lights<sup>8</sup> in the upper chamber, where we were gathered

here gives the list of those who accompanied him, mentioning the towns from which they came. They were evidently representatives appointed by the different Churches to convey the offering to the Church at Jerusalem. Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, of Beroea, and Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, represented the Churches of Macedonia. Gaius of Derbe and Timothy (of Lystra) represented the Churches of Galatia. We must suppose that St. Paul had made arrangements for the collection in Galatia on his last journey through Galatia on the way to Ephesus (Acts xviii. 23, 1 Cor. xvi. 1). Tychicus and Trophimus represented the Churches of Asia. The representatives of Achaia are not named, and yet it was particularly in Achaia that St. Paul directed that representatives should be appointed, 'When I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve by letters, them will I send to carry your bounty to Jerusalem, and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me' (1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4). It seems therefore most likely that when, through the good offices of Titus, the Corinthian Christians were reconciled to St. Paul, they showed their repentance for their former contumacy by choosing as their delegates Titus and 'the

9 together. And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, bornedown with deep sleep ; and as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep he fell down from the third story, and was taken up  
10 dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado ; for

brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the Churches,' especially considering the fact that this brother was appointed by the Churches to travel with St. Paul in the matter of this charitable offering (2 Cor. viii. 19). Assuming, as we have done above, that this brother was St. Luke himself, and that he was the brother of Titus, we shall understand them to be included in the 'us' and 'we' of Acts xx. 5, 6. The exact movements of the delegates are not clear, partly because of the uncertainty of the text in verses 4 and 5. The words, 'as far as Asia' in verse 4 should be omitted with the best manuscripts. They were inserted through some misunderstanding of the reference to Troas. Actually we know that Trophimus and Aristarchus went as far as Palestine, and it is most probable that all the delegates went there. Further, in verse 5 the best manuscripts have 'and these men came and were awaiting us at Troas.' Here as in verse 4 the R.V. has followed the Bezan text. The only meaning that can be got out of the Bezan text is that St. Paul and the delegates went by land to Macedonia and thence by sea to Troas, and there waited until St. Luke and his companions

his life is in him. And when he was gone up, 11 and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the 12 lad alive, and were not a little comforted.

But we, going before to the ship, set sail for 13 Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, intending himself to go by

followed and joined them at Troas—a most unlikely programme. With the better text excellent sense can be got if we take the word ‘these men’ in verse 5 to refer only to Tychicus and Trophimus. St. Luke means that all the delegates mentioned, except Tychicus and Trophimus went with St. Paul, Titus and himself, from Corinth to Troas *via* Macedonia. At Troas they met the two delegates from Ephesus who had come there to meet them. On sailing from Philippi (or more accurately its port Neapolis) for Troas, St. Luke first uses the word ‘we’. This does not prove that he had not travelled with the rest of the party from Corinth. As a matter of fact it is most probable that he was with the party from Corinth for he was with St. Paul at Corinth when Rom. xvi. 21 was written.

**The Epistle to the Romans.** This greatest of St. Paul’s epistles, in which he lays down clearly the doctrine of life through the Spirit, echoing the controversy with Galatia as an old battle fought and won, was sent to Rome from Corinth during the course of St. Paul’s last stay there. The evidence for the date

- 14 land. And when he met us at Assos, we took  
15 him in, and came to Mitylene. And sailing  
from thence, we came the following day over  
against Chios ; and the next day we touched at  
Samos ; and the day after we came to Miletus.  
16 For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus,  
that he might not have to spend time in Asia ;  
for he was hastening, if it were possible for  
him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

is in xv. 25-29 in which he says that he is now going to Jerusalem, ministering to the saints, and purposes thereafter to visit Rome and Spain. The evidence for the Corinthian origin is chiefly in the commendation of Phoebe, a servant of the Church at Cenchreae the port of Corinth, xvi. 1. With regard to this there is however a certain measure of doubt, for internal evidence of chapter xvi suggests that it was written to Ephesus rather than to Rome—particularly the salutation to Epaenetus, the first-fruits of Asia, and to Prisca, and Aquila and the Church in their house, seeing that as recently as 1 Corinthians these two were in Ephesus and had a Church in their house (1 Cor. xvi. 19). There is also evidence that some manuscripts of the epistle lacked the name of Rome in the salutation of i. 7 ; and that some manuscripts (whether the same or others is not quite certain) omitted the last two chapters of the epistle. The whole question is exceedingly complicated and cannot be dealt with here. The most we can say for certain is that the epistle, or almost the whole of it, was sent by St. Paul

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and **17** called to him the elders of the church. And **18** when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was

from Corinth to Rome on the occasion of his last visit there. Whether chapter xvi had a separate existence, as a commendatory letter of Phoebe from Corinth to Ephesus ; and whether other editions of the epistle, without the name of Rome, and with slightly different endings, were sent at the same time or at different times, to other Churches, are questions which remain to be settled by further investigation.

7-17. At Troas it was necessary to change ships, which forced the party to wait a week. The last day was a Sunday, and was of course the occasion for the sacrament of the Breaking of Bread. The casual way in which St. Luke mentions the fact is as if he was writing for people who always observed Sunday thus. The observance of Sunday as the Lord's day began when the Lord appeared at least twice on Sundays to the disciples after the resurrection. There is no evidence that the early disciples regarded Sunday as a substitute for the Jewish sabbath. After the Jewish sabbath was over, with all the petty restrictions that the Pharisees had laid upon it, i.e. at sunset on Saturday, the Christians would gather together to rejoice in the freedom of the resurrection life. Then was a suitable occasion for giving of alms (1 Cor. xvi. 2).



- 19 with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews:  
20 how that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you  
21 publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.  
22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that

Then also the Christians enjoyed their Love-feast or 'Agape,' and finished with the sacramental observance of the Breaking of Bread.<sup>1</sup> On the occasion recorded here it seems that St. Paul was giving a long farewell address lasting till close on midnight, and that this was to be followed by the Sacrament, and after the Sacrament, by a meal. The accident to Eutychus caused an interruption at the close of the address. We have no sufficient evidence whether the Eucharist always preceded or followed the Love-feast; but we do know that before long the two were separated, so that the Eucharist might be celebrated without the distractions of an ordinary meal. The recovery of Eutychus was probably understood by St. Luke to be miraculous, for he says that

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay thinks that on this occasion the Christians met on Sunday night, and St. Paul and his party embarked on Monday morning. But if this was the usual custom it would be hard to account for the universal custom of celebrating the Eucharist early Sunday morning.

shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost<sup>23</sup> testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I<sup>24</sup> hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye<sup>25</sup> all, among whom I went about preaching the

‘he was taken up dead.’ On the other hand, St. Paul did not say that the boy would rise from the dead, but that life was in him. Anyhow the recovery was not absolutely sudden. The ship was due to start early in the day, and the party had to embark in the middle of the night. St. Paul however stayed on until day-break, partly no doubt for the sake of further converse with the Christians of Troas, and partly to see how it went with Eutychus. By day-break he was able to walk, and those who had been tending him took him to his home, so that there was general rejoicing. St. Paul then crossed the promontory by land, and, as this was a much shorter route than the ship had to take, he was able to arrive at Assos in time for the ship. Each evening, as the wind dropped, the ship stopped for the night, and St. Luke has given us the names of the stopping places. From Samos they were not able to reach Miletus in one day, and spent the night off Cape Trogyllia—a piece of information only preserved in the Bezan text. The ship did not stop at Ephesus,

26 kingdom, shall see my face no more. Where-  
fore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure  
27 from the blood of all men. For I shrank not  
from declaring unto you the whole counsel of  
28 God. Take heed unto yourselves, and to all  
the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath  
made you bishops, to feed the church of God,

for St. Paul was hastening to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, and had therefore chosen a fast ship from Troas. Verse 16 suggests that he could have chosen a ship that would have stopped at Ephesus, but he would have been thereby delayed. The length of stay at Miletus was not sufficiently certain for it to be safe for St. Paul to go to Ephesus, but he sent for the Ephesian elders ('presbyters' is the word used), and they were able to come in time to meet him before the ship sailed. It is interesting to find St. Paul anxious to keep the feast of Pentecost. We have no information as to how long the Jewish Christians continued to observe Jewish feasts, or even the sabbath. But their desire to win their fellow Jews for Christ would make them observe such Jewish ordinances as long as the Jews allowed them. The Christian elders (presbyters) of Ephesus are called by another name (episcopoi) in verse 28. From these two names are derived our words 'priest' and 'bishop.' The period we are dealing with was one of transition. To begin with there had been the twelve, who, with a few others like St. James the Brother of our Lord, and St. Paul, were the acknowledged

which he purchased with his own blood. I 29  
know that after my departing grievous wolves  
shall enter in among you, not sparing the  
flock; and from among your own selves shall 30  
men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw  
away the disciples after them. Wherefore 31  
watch ye, remembering that by the space of  
three years I ceased not to admonish every one  
night and day with tears. And now I com- 32  
mend you to God, and to the word of his grace,

leaders. Their authority in the Churches outside Palestine was that of 'apostles' or 'missionaries', and to this number of 'apostles' a few others were added such as Barnabas. But such a supreme order of ministry, restricted to the missionaries, could not last. As the local Churches began to be independent of the services of missionaries, there began to be distinctions in the elders who had been appointed locally. By the time that St. Paul wrote his epistle to Philippi there were in that city two grades of officials (Phil. i. 1), and with the disappearance of the order of 'apostles' or 'missionaries' it was natural for the Christians in each place to appoint a single elder as their head. As soon therefore as we leave the apostolic period we find such single leaders in every place, bearing the title of 'episcopoi' or 'bishops'.

18-38. Looking back at the trials through which he had been during his long stay at Ephesus, and looking forward to the bonds and afflictions which the future had in store for him, the great apostle

which is able to build *you* up, and to give *you* the inheritance among all them that are  
33 sanctified. I coveted no man's silver, or gold,  
34 or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to  
35 them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, how that so labouring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

opened his heart to the elders of Ephesus. Easily he could have avoided the trials in Ephesus by holding back some part of the truth, that part which was unpalatable to Jews. Easily too he could avoid the perils that were ahead of him. But so doing he would not be accomplishing the course which God had appointed him to run. St. Paul revealed this conflict of his soul to the elders, because he feared that men less single-minded would assume charge of Christ's flock. His speech sets a wonderful ideal before the Church's pastors and missionaries of every age, and those who are in such positions would do well to ponder over this ideal of selfless love, and to remember the sentence of the Master, which by some strange chance has been recorded here but not in the Gospels, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' As a commentary on this speech we cannot do better than quote from a letter written by Sir Rabindranath Tagore to a prospective missionary, 'Will you be able to make yourself one with those whom you call

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled **36** down, and prayed with them all. And they **37** all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word **38** which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no more. And they brought him on his way unto the ship.

natives, not merely in habits but in love? For it is utterly degrading to receive any benefit but that which is offered in the spirit of love. God is love; and all that we receive at His hands blesses us. But when a man tries to usurp God's place and assumes the rôle of a giver of gifts, and does not come as a mere purveyor of God's love then all is vanity.' <sup>1</sup>

**28. The Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.** There is no expression in the New Testament quite like this, which speaks of the blood shed on the Cross as the blood of God. Such an expression does not belong to the earliest age of the Church, and could only have been used at a time when theological speculation had been at work. Some manuscripts have altered 'God' into 'the Lord', and, though this change makes a sentence which St. Paul might have used, it is not likely to be the original text. Dr. Hort suggested an early corruption of the text, the word 'son' having dropped out. It would then read, 'the Church of God which He purchased with the blood of His own Son.'

<sup>1</sup> *International Review of Missions*, July, 1922, p. 455.

**21**<sub>1</sub> And when it came to pass that we were parted from them, and had set sail, we came with a straight course unto Cos, and the next day unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara :  
**2** and having found a ship crossing over unto  
**3** Phœnicia, we went aboard, and set sail. And when we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed unto Syria, and landed at Tyre : for there the ship was to  
**4** unlade her burden. And having found the disciples, we tarried there seven days : and these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should

FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME xxi-xxviii

1-16. Leaving Ephesus the party continued their voyage as far as Patara. Either there, or at Myra according to the Bezan text, they found a ship sailing straight across to Syria, which brought them to Tyre. So favourable had the voyages been that St. Paul found he had still plenty of time to spare to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost. The ship was not leaving Tyre for a week, as it had to unload there, but St. Paul was content to wait rather than to make the less comfortable journey by land. At Tyre they searched and found some disciples, and stayed with them, and when the week was over they bade St. Paul and his party an affectionate farewell on the sea-shore. The ship brought them next to Ptolemais, where they had a whole day with the disciples, and on the following day to Cæsarea. Although it is not quite certain,



not set foot in Jerusalem. And when it came 5  
to pass that we had accomplished the days, we  
departed and went on our journey ; and they  
all, with wives and children, brought us on our  
way, till we were out of the city : and kneeling  
down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each 6  
other farewell ; and we went on board the ship,  
but they returned home again.

And when we had finished the voyage from 7  
Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais ; and we saluted  
the brethren, and abode with them one day.

it is probable that they went all the way to Cæsarea by sea, and in the same ship that had brought them to Tyre. At Cæsarea they stayed with Philip the evangelist, one of the seven. Nothing has been told of him since he went to Cæsarea in viii. 40, and he may have remained working there all the intervening years. St. Luke's mention of him and of his prophetic daughters shows that he was interested to meet them, and it is a very probable suggestion that they related many of the events of the early days which St. Luke has incorporated in Acts. Throughout the whole of his journey to Jerusalem St. Paul had received intimations from prophets that he would be imprisoned at Jerusalem (xx. 23). At Tyre disciples had gone so far as to tell him 'through the Spirit' not to go to Jerusalem. St. Paul did not take this message as a command of God. He believed their statement that imprisonment awaited him, but was

- 8 And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the  
9 seven, we abode with him. Now this man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.  
10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named  
11 Agabus. And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the  
12 hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

convinced that it was the will of God that he should go up to Jerusalem and complete the offering of the contribution from the Churches for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. St. Luke evidently said too much in xxi. 4 when he said that the command not to go up to Jerusalem was through the Spirit. It is a useful reminder to us that even saintly people may be mistaken in what they believe to be the divine guidance in some practical project, when they probably would not be mistaken about a question of moral right or wrong. St. Paul and his party stayed long enough in Cæsarea for news of his arrival to reach Jerusalem and for Agabus to come from Jerusalem to meet him. Agabus is the same prophet who foretold the famine

Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping **13**  
and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to  
be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for  
the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he **14**  
would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying,  
The will of the Lord be done.

And after these days we took up our **15**  
baggage, and went up to Jerusalem. And **16**  
there went with us also *certain* of the disciples  
from Cæsarea, bringing *with them* one Mnason  
of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we  
should lodge.

in xi. 28. Here he prophesied St. Paul's imprisonment; and as in the case of the famine we may assume that his prophecy was based on information gathered in the ordinary way. Coming straight from Jerusalem he would have a pretty clear notion of the general feeling of the Jews towards St. Paul. To say this is not to deny the spiritual nature of the prophecy. For it is surely as much a spiritual process to use the powers of observation and intellectual deduction which God has given us, as to receive information through a dream. Not only the whole of St. Paul's companions, but also the Christians of Cæsarea, were much agitated at the news brought by Agabus, and tried to dissuade St. Paul from going up to Jerusalem, only desisting when they realized that he felt it his duty to go to the city even if it meant martyrdom for the name of the Lord Jesus. At Cæsarea they made

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the  
18 brethren received us gladly. And the day  
following Paul went in with us unto James ;  
19 and all the elders were present. And when he  
had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the  
things which God had wrought among the  
20 Gentiles by his ministry. And they, when they  
heard it, glorified God ; and they said unto  
him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands  
there are among the Jews of them which have  
believed ; and they are all zealous for the law :

preparations for the land journey. The word translated ' we took up our baggage ' (verse 15) refers to these preparations, including probably provision of horses. Verse 16 is not very easy to translate, but it should probably be rendered thus, ' And there went with us also certain of the disciples from Cæsarea, bringing us to the house of one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple with whom we should lodge.' The journey from Cæsarea to Jerusalem was too far to be done comfortably in one day, and Mnason's house was probably at one of the stages on the way where they stopped to change horses. This fact is added in the Bezan text, perhaps from local knowledge.

17-26. The day following the arrival of St. Paul and his party there was a formal reception by the Church, at which the James, the Lord's brother presided, and all the elders were present. Whether any of the twelve apostles were there we do not know ;

and they have been informed concerning thee, 21  
that thou teachest all the Jews which are  
among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling  
them not to circumcise their children, neither  
to walk after the customs. What is it there- 22  
fore? they will certainly hear that thou art come.  
Do therefore this that we say to thee: We 23  
have four men which have a vow on them;  
these take, and purify thyself with them, and 24  
be at charges for them, that they may shave  
their heads: and all shall know that there is  
no truth in the things whereof they have been

if so they would be included in the general term of 'elders'. This meeting was no doubt the occasion for handing over to the elders the gift from the Gentile Churches. The only mention of this offering in Acts is xxiv. 17. St. Luke's silence is to be accounted for by the fact that he himself was most prominent in this work (2 Cor. viii. 18, 19) and he did not wish to speak of his own doings. At the meeting St. Paul related the wonderful works of God among the Gentiles. The Jewish Christians then proposed that, by way of meeting the charges that he was teaching Jews not to keep the Law, he should join in the observance of a vow in the temple. The vow in question, a development of the Nazirite vow of the Old Testament, had been taken by four Jewish Christians, but when the time for the completion of the vow came they found they had not enough money to

informed concerning thee ; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law.

25 But as touching the Gentiles which have believed, we wrote, giving judgement that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is

26 strangled, and from fornication. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them.

pay for the necessary offerings. This contingency often arose, and it was possible for another person, charitably inclined, to join in with those who had taken the vow, and provide the offerings. If we are surprised at St. Paul agreeing to this proposal we must remember that he was not opposed to the Law as such. He was opposed to the idea that the Law provided a way of salvation. He could not allow that any part of the ritual Law was obligatory, but would for that very reason be more favourably inclined towards a purely voluntary piece of ritual such as the taking and fulfilling of a vow. Nor must we forget that, though he was an apostle of the Gentiles, yet his heart's desire and his supplication to God was for the Jews that they might be saved (Rom. x. 1). St. James and the elders made it quite clear to St. Paul that they were not asking him to abate any

And when the seven days were almost 27 completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of 28 Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and moreover he brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. For they had before 29 seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had

of his principles, for the Gentiles had been given complete freedom, and only been warned against idolatry, murder, and fornication.<sup>1</sup>

27-36. Our information about the exact usages of the Nazirite vow at the time is not sufficient to explain the 'seven days.' That however seems to have been the time required, at least in this particular case, for completing the vows of the four men. When the time was nearly over, certain Jews from Asia raised a riot and seized St. Paul in the temple. The charges brought against him, though expressed in general terms, contained a considerable element of truth. He taught 'against the people' in the sense that the privileges of the Jewish people were open for all mankind. He taught 'against the Law' in the sense that no one would be justified from sin by the Law.

<sup>1</sup> 'Things strangled' is to be omitted, with some manuscripts, as in xv. 20, 29.



- 30** brought into the temple. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together : and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple : and straightway the doors were shut.
- 31** And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings came up to the chief captain of the band, that
- 32** all Jerusalem was in confusion. And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions, and ran down upon them : and they, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul.
- 33** Then the chief captain came near, and laid hold on him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains ; and inquired who he was,

He taught 'against this Place' in the sense that God's habitation was in the hearts of men, and not within temple walls. It was not true that he had brought Greeks into the temple ; but it was true that he had brought Greeks into the fellowship of the true Israel. Knowing the general attitude of St. Paul, the Jews were quite prepared to see him actually bring Gentiles into the temple. Was there perhaps a half-suspicion that Messiah had really come, and that the prophecy was going to be fulfilled that the temple should be a House of Prayer for all the nations ? Anyhow, they needed little persuading that St. Paul had defied the warning engraved on the wall that marked off the Court of the Women from the Court of the Gentiles : ' No stranger to enter within the fence and enclosure round the temple. Whosoever is

and what he had done. And some shouted 34  
one thing, some another, among the crowd :  
and when he could not know the certainty for  
the uproar, he commanded him to be brought  
into the castle. And when he came upon the 35  
stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the  
soldiers for the violence of the crowd ; for the 36  
multitude of the people followed after, crying  
out, Away with him.

And as Paul was about to be brought into 37  
the castle, he saith unto the chief captain, May  
I say something unto thee ? And he said, Dost

caught will only have himself to thank for the death  
which will follow.' The accusation was enough,  
and the crowd which gathered were attempting to  
beat St. Paul to death. Riots at festival time were  
common, and the Roman authorities kept a watch  
for such occurrences. Word therefore was quickly  
brought to the chief captain, or chiliarch, who  
hastened down with soldiers from the castle, which  
stood at the north-west corner of the temple enclosure.  
Supposing St. Paul to be some malefactor he ordered  
him to be securely bound. The populace were loudly  
crying for him to be executed, but such was the  
tumult that the chiliarch could not discover what he  
had done.

xxi. 37-xxii. 21. As St. Paul was being rescued from  
the crowd and carried up the steps to the Castle or  
Fortress of Antonia he asked permission to speak to

38 thou know Greek? Art thou not then the Egyptian, which before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the  
39 four thousand men of the Assassins? But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and I beseech thee, give me  
40 leave to speak unto the people. And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand unto the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew language, saying,

the people. The chiliarch, Claudius Lysias, had thought that he must be an Egyptian who only quite recently had stirred up sedition and had led a great crowd of the extremest section of the Jews—fanatical nationalists who did not stop short at assassination—to the Mount of Olives, saying that the walls of Jerusalem would fall flat. Many of his followers had been killed by the Roman soldiers, but he himself had escaped. When St. Paul spoke in Greek the chiliarch recognized that he was not the Egyptian rebel, and asked who he was. In reply St. Paul said nothing of his Roman citizenship, but only spoke of his standing as a Jew, to show that he had every right to be in the temple. Leave being granted to speak, he addressed the crowd in their native Aramaic. (The language we call Hebrew, in which most of the Old Testament was written, was a dead language at that time.) His defence consisted chiefly of a proof of his Jewish

Brethren and fathers, hear ye the defence <sup>221</sup> which I now make unto you.

And when they heard that he spake unto <sup>2</sup> them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet : and he saith,

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but <sup>3</sup> brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day : and I persecuted this <sup>4</sup> Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also <sup>5</sup> the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders : from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also which

birth and strict orthodoxy. His early persecution of the Christians showed how devoted he was to the Law, and he was only turned from that attitude by a vision given him by God on the road to Damascus. His mission to the Gentiles was again in consequence of a vision, the scene of which was the temple, which he was accused of having defiled. There was enough in the speech to enrage the Jews, particularly the reference to Jesus as Lord. But the statement that Jesus had said to him, ' Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles ' was too much for them, and they would hear no more.

17. There is no other reference to this vision in

- were there unto Jerusalem in bonds, for to be  
6 punished. And it came to pass, that, as I  
made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damas-  
cus, about noon, suddenly there shone from  
7 heaven a great light round about me. And I  
fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying  
unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?  
8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And  
he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth,  
9 whom thou persecutest. And they that were  
with me beheld indeed the light, but they  
heard not the voice of him that spake to me.  
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the  
Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Da-  
mascus; and there it shall be told thee of all  
things which are appointed for thee to do.  
11 And when I could not see for the glory of that  
light, being led by the hand of them that were

the temple. The fact that St. Paul said it occurred when he returned to Jerusalem suggests at once that it was on the occasion of his first visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion (Gal. i. 18, Acts ix. 26-30). But as the text of ix. 26-30 stands at present, it could not have taken place then, as on that occasion the reason for leaving Jerusalem was a Jewish plot; but here it was in obedience to a revelation from God. It is, however, difficult to think that the vision took place at the second visit, fourteen, or perhaps even

with me, I came into Damascus. And one<sup>12</sup>  
Ananias, a devout man according to the law,  
well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt  
there, came unto me, and standing by me said<sup>13</sup>  
unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And  
in that very hour I looked up on him. And<sup>14</sup>  
he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed  
thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous  
One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For<sup>15</sup>  
thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of  
what thou hast seen and heard. And now<sup>16</sup>  
why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized,  
and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.  
And it came to pass, that, when I had returned<sup>17</sup>  
to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple,  
I fell into a trance, and saw him saying unto<sup>18</sup>  
me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of  
Jerusalem: because they will not receive of

seventeen, years after his conversion, for the Jews would not then have St. Paul's jealous persecution of the Christians so fresh in their memory as is suggested by xxii. 19, 20. If however the emendation proposed in ix. 28 of omitting the words 'to Jerusalem' be accepted, the vision would fit in well with the visit there described. Ramsay objects<sup>1</sup> to this identification on the grounds that the vision should have been

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul the Traveller*, pp. 62, 63.

- 19 thee testimony concerning me. And I said,  
Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned  
and beat in every synagogue them that believed  
20 on thee : and when the blood of Stephen thy  
witness was shed, I also was standing by, and  
consenting, and keeping the garments of them  
21 that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart :  
for I will send thee forth far hence unto the  
Gentiles.
- 22 And they gave him audience unto this word ;  
and they lifted up their voice, and said, Away  
with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not  
23 fit that he should live. And as they cried out,

followed by an immediate mission to the Gentiles. But we do not know what sort of work St. Paul did when he went to Tarsus, and in any case St. Paul does not appear to have felt that his call to work among the Gentiles was only a later development : in his speech before Agrippa (xxvi. 17) he could even speak as if the call to preach to the Gentiles dated from his conversion.

22-30. Claudius Lysias may not have known any Aramaic, but even if he had been able to follow St. Paul's speech he would have been utterly at a loss to understand the violent outburst of wrath that interrupted the speech. There was evidently here no charge of murder or any grievous crime, and for an outsider it was difficult to see anything in the speech



and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air, the chief captain commanded him **24** to be brought into the castle, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him. And when they had tied him up **25** with the thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? And when the centurion heard it, he went to **26** the chief captain, and told him, saying, What art thou about to do? for this man is a Roman. And the chief captain came, and said unto **27**

that could be construed as blasphemy. He therefore resorted to the barbarous practice common in those days of having the prisoner scourged to extract from him a confession of his crime. The soldiers were already binding St. Paul into position to be scourged, and a centurion was standing by to hear his confession of guilt, when St. Paul claimed his Roman citizenship as he had done at Philippi (xvi. 37). The Roman citizenship was still a rare enough honour for the chiliarch not to have thought that this fanatical Jew might be the possessor of that freedom. He himself had obtained it by a large sum of money, probably from the wife of the Emperor Claudius, who had introduced the debased custom of selling the honour for gold. How St. Paul came to possess it we do not know, but as he was a Roman by birth he must have

- him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he  
28 said, Yea. And the chief captain answered,  
With a great sum obtained I this citizenship.  
And Paul said, But I am a *Roman* born.  
29 They then which were about to examine him  
straightway departed from him: and the chief  
captain also was afraid, when he knew that  
he was a Roman, and because he had bound  
him.  
30 But on the morrow, desiring to know the  
certainty, wherefore he was accused of the  
Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief  
priests and all the council to come together,  
and brought Paul down, and set him before  
them.

inherited it from his father, who probably had done some signal service to the State. To have bound a Roman citizen was so serious an offence that Claudius Lysias was afraid that the matter might become known and punishment might be inflicted on him. He might therefore have let St. Paul go free; but the position of Roman rulers in Palestine was exceedingly difficult, for they were expected to administer Roman Law, and at the same time to consider as far as possible the susceptibilities and superstitions of the Jews. He therefore decided to allow the Jewish religious authorities, that is the sanhedrin, to meet and judge the case under his supervision.

And Paul, looking stedfastly on the council, <sup>231</sup> said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. And the high 2 priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said 3 Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to

1-11. We are probably to understand that this gathering was a more or less regular meeting of the sanhedrin; but whether Claudius Lysias intended to allow them to pronounce judgment, or whether he was only seeking information on the basis of which he could pass judgment, does not appear; for the meeting broke up without any clear decision being given. The account of the meeting is not sufficiently ample for us to get a clear idea of what transpired. We should naturally suppose that the first item would have been a formal indictment of St. Paul by his enemies. St. Luke has probably omitted this part, as not being of sufficient interest to his readers, assuming that it followed the general lines of xxi. 28, 'This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the Law, and this place; and moreover he brought Greeks also into the Temple, and hath defiled this Holy Place.' If, on the other hand, St. Paul's exclamation, 'I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day,' preceded the indictment, it explains more readily the outburst of anger from the high priest. But even if St. Paul had broken the

4 be smitten contrary to the law? And they  
that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high  
5 priest? And Paul said, I wist not, brethren,  
that he was high priest: for it is written, Thou  
shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people.  
6 But when Paul perceived that the one part  
were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he  
cried out in the council, Brethren, I am a  
Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the  
hope and resurrection of the dead I am called  
7 in question. And when he had so said, there  
arose a dissension between the Pharisees and  
Sadducees: and the assembly was divided.

rules of propriety in the court, there could be no excuse for the high priest's action, and St. Paul's answer, though hasty, was perfectly justified. The others present were shocked at St. Paul's daring to rebuke the high priest; and St. Paul was ready to acknowledge that he ought not to have so spoken. Considerable difficulty has been felt about St. Paul's statement that he did not know that Ananias was the high priest, and attempts have been made to translate or interpret the words otherwise. We can only suppose that at this somewhat informal gathering the high priest was not presiding, and that St. Paul, owing to his long absence from Jerusalem, did not know him by sight. It was probably after further progress of the meeting that St. Paul suddenly exclaimed that he stood for the Pharisaic doctrine of

For the Sadducees say that there is no resur-<sup>8</sup>rection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a<sup>9</sup> great clamour: and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' part stood up, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: and what if a

the resurrection. It has universally been held that St. Paul was not justified in this action. For though the resurrection, and particularly the resurrection of Jesus, was one of the central planks of the Christian platform; yet, St. Paul's doctrine of the new realm of Spirit was directly opposed to the Pharisaic doctrine of the Law, and St. Paul was arrested not for teaching the resurrection, but for his attitude towards the Law. For the moment it seemed as if St. Paul had broken down the opposition by the clamour that immediately arose between Pharisees and Sadducees, but he did not thereby make the Pharisees his friends. For his momentary advantage he had to pay dearly. If he had allowed the proceedings of the Council to take their course he would have been cleared of the serious charge of taking Greeks into the temple, and Claudius Lysias would have set him free—for the other charges, dealing with disturbances in other parts of the world, would not have come under the chiliarch's jurisdiction. As it was the chiliarch could make nothing definite out of the charges and the tumultuous wrangling, and left the Council with the indefinite feeling that St. Paul was somehow a disturber of the peace. St. Paul had to be rescued

10 spirit hath spoken to him, or an angel? And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

by soldiers from the wrangling Jews, and the chiliarch was no wiser than before as to the cause of the disturbance. St. Luke has added a note in verses 7, 8, on the tenets of the Sadducees. These were the old aristocracy of the Jews who had never accepted the doctrine of the resurrection which had come in at the close of the Old Testament times. What is meant by the further statement that the Sadducees did not believe in angels or spirits is not clear, nor is it supported by other testimony. As the Sadducees accepted the Torah they must have believed in the 'angel of the Lord' who is mentioned there on several occasions. They may not have believed the more complicated teaching of hierarchies of angels which the later Jews borrowed from the Persians. In some sense they must have believed in 'spirits', i.e. that men have spirits as well as bodies; but as they disbelieved in the resurrection they may not have believed it possible for the Spirit of Jesus to

And when it was day, the Jews banded 12 together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more 13 than forty which made this conspiracy. And 14 they came to the chief priests and the elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. Now therefore do ye with the 15 council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you, as though ye would judge of his case more exactly : and we, or ever he come near, are ready to slay him. But 16 Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, and he came and entered into the castle, and

come and appear to St. Paul. However we may criticize the attitude adopted by St. Paul during this trial, and however far short we may feel that it falls from the attitude of non-resistance of our Lord, God knew that he was doing his best to bear witness to the truth ; and the vision of the following night assured him of the favour of God and encouraged him to bear up in the weary years of waiting that were to follow.

12-35. The meeting of the sanhedrin was such a complete failure that it was natural to suppose that the chiliarch would call for another meeting to complete the trial of the prisoner. Some of the Jews thought that this would be their opportunity. By



17 told Paul. And Paul called unto him one of the centurions, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath something  
18 to tell him. So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and saith, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and asked me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath  
19 something to say to thee. And the chief captain took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, What is that thou hast  
20 to tell me? And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask thee to bring down Paul tomorrow unto the council, as though thou wouldest inquire somewhat more exactly

that time they had presumably discovered that they had been mistaken in supposing that St. Paul had taken Greeks into the temple, and therefore they knew that it would be impossible to obtain a judicial sentence of death. But if a sufficient number of them raised a commotion and surrounded St. Paul, they thought they could assassinate him without the murderer being identified. Forty men joined in the plot, taking a solemn oath to place themselves under the curse of God if they ate or drank before accomplishing their fell purpose. This plot became known to St. Paul through a nephew of his (of whom there is no other mention), and so came to the ears of the chiliarch. It was perfectly obvious to the latter that if a Roman citizen was killed by the mob there would

concerning him. Do not thou therefore yield **21** unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves under a curse, neither to eat nor to drink till they have slain him: and now are they ready, looking for the promise from thee. So the chief captain let the young man go, **22** charging him, Tell no man that thou hast signified these things to me. And he called **23** unto him two of the centurions, and said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night: and *he bade them* provide beasts, **24** that they might set Paul thereon, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. And he **25** wrote a letter after this form:

be an enquiry, and in the course of enquiry his own action in having bound the prisoner would be sure to come to light. It was therefore necessary for him not only to protect his prisoner, but also to represent the occurrences in such a way as to make it appear that he was all along defending the Roman name. St. Luke was not able to give the exact letter that Claudius Lysias wrote to Felix the Procurator of Judæa, but gave the substance of it, probably from information that came out at the trial at Cæsarea. The letter as given corresponds to the facts, except

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent  
27 governor Felix, greeting. This man was  
seized by the Jews, and was about to be slain  
of them, when I came upon them with the  
soldiers, and rescued him, having learned that  
28 he was a Roman. And desiring to know the  
cause wherefore they accused him, I brought  
29 him down unto their council: whom I found  
to be accused about questions of their law, but  
to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of  
30 death or of bonds. And when it was shewn  
to me that there would be a plot against the  
man, I sent him to thee forthwith, charging  
his accusers also to speak against him before  
thee.

the chiliarch's statement that he rescued St. Paul after having learned that he was a Roman citizen. The military escort provided to conduct St. Paul consisted of 470 men, of whom seventy were cavalry. Horses were provided for St. Paul: 'horses' in the plural, either to carry baggage, or perhaps for some of St. Paul's companions who may have been prisoners also. Leaving at 9 p.m. they hastened on the journey to Antipatris thirty-five miles away, which they reached on the following day. From there the escort consisted only of the horsemen. As the march to Antipatris would be rather difficult for foot-soldiers in the time mentioned, it may be worth while noting that two manuscripts give evidence which suggests

So the soldiers, as it was commanded them, **31** took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. But on the morrow they left the **32** horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: and they, when they came to Cæsarea, **33** and delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before him. And when **34** he had read it, he asked of what province he was; and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, I will hear thy cause, said he, **35** when thine accusers also are come: and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace.

And after five days the high priest Ananias **241** came down with certain elders, and *with* an orator, one Tertullus; and they informed the

that the composition of the escort may have become magnified in the process of transcribing manuscripts. In any case, there would be no difficulty for the horsemen, unaccompanied by foot-soldiers, in completing the twenty-seven miles from Antipatris to Cæsarea on the second day. On their arrival Felix read the letter and asked for particulars of St. Paul's Province, and postponed further action till the accusers should arrive.

1-9. From xxiii. 30 we gather that Claudius Lysias informed the Jewish leaders of the action he had taken. If they were informed on the morning after St. Paul's departure, and waited one further day before starting, and took three days over the journey,

2 governor against Paul. And when he was  
called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying,  
Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace,  
and that by thy providence evils are corrected  
3 for this nation, we accept it in all ways and in  
all places, most excellent Felix, with all thank-  
4 fulness. But, that I be not further tedious  
unto thee, I intreat thee to hear us of thy

they would arrive five days after St. Paul left Jerusalem, as stated in xxiv. 1. If we add to these five days, the six days in which St. Paul was engaged in the ritual of the vow, and one day in Jerusalem as a prisoner, we get twelve days as the period between his arrival in Jerusalem and his trial before Felix (xxiv. 11). The proceedings at Cæsarea began with a speech by a professional pleader named Tertullus. The beginning of his speech should be translated thus, 'Seeing that by thee we enjoy much peace, and that by thy providence evils are corrected for this nation in all ways and in all places, we accept it, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.' It was usual for speeches in the law courts to begin with such flattering phrases, but in this case they were peculiarly ill-founded. Felix was a very bad ruler, and the only good thing that he is known to have done was to put down the bands of assassins mentioned in xxi. 38. The charges brought by Tertullus are much the same as those previously mentioned; he accused St. Paul of raising insurrections in other parts of the world, but instead of saying

clemency a few words. For we have found 5  
this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of  
insurrections among all the Jews throughout  
the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the  
Nazarenes : who moreover assayed to profane 6  
the temple : on whom also we laid hold : from 8  
whom thou wilt be able, by examining him  
thyself, to take knowledge of all these things,  
whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also 9  
joined in the charge, affirming that these things  
were so.

that he had actually taken Greeks into the temple he merely said that he was *trying* to profane the temple. He spoke of St. Paul as a ringleader of the Nazoreans. Jerome tells us that 'Nazarenes' or 'Nazoreans' was a Jewish title for Jewish Christians. At a later date it became a common Muhammedan title for Christians generally. Our Lord Himself was called 'the Nazorean'. The origin of the name is uncertain, and it is not known whether it was connected with the town of Nazareth or not. The Bezan text has expanded verses 6-8 as follows, 'on whom also we laid hold, and we would have judged him according to our law ; (verse 7) but the chiliarch Lysias came, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, (verse 8) commanding his accusers to come before thee, from whom (singular) thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.' In the true text, as translated in the R.V., the words 'from

10 And when the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, Paul answered,

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do  
11 cheerfully make my defence : seeing that thou canst take knowledge, that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at  
12 Jerusalem : and neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city.

whom ' refer to St. Paul, but in the Bezan text they must refer to Lysias. Lysias was obviously not in a position to support the charges brought against St. Paul, and the Bezan text therefore betrays itself here as an insertion by a not very intelligent scribe.

10-21. In response to a sign from Felix St. Paul made his defence. The words with which he began were not merely flattery like those of Tertullus. The fact that the Procurator had been several years in office would make him familiar with the date of Pentecost, and with the custom of pilgrims arriving just in time for the feast. St. Paul naturally passed over the accusations of stirring up trouble in other parts of the world, as these accusations had not been supported by any statements of time and place, and in any case did not come under Felix's jurisdiction. He proceeded at once to deny the charge of stirring up trouble in Jerusalem, and as the date of his arrival in Jerusalem was so recent it would be easy to prove the truth of his statement. He acknowledged that he followed the



Neither can they prove to thee the things<sup>13</sup>  
whereof they now accuse me. But this I<sup>14</sup>  
confess unto thee, that after the Way which  
they call a sect, so serve I the God of our  
fathers, believing all things which are accord-  
ing to the law, and which are written in the  
prophets: having hope toward God, which<sup>15</sup>  
these also themselves look for, that there shall  
be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.

particular way of worshipping the ancestral God of the Jews, which they called a Sect; but claimed that in so doing he was following the Jewish Scriptures, and that, as a matter of fact, the central part of his teaching was concerned with a belief held by the Jews themselves, namely, a resurrection of just and unjust. Although a resurrection of the wicked as well as the righteous is spoken of in Daniel xii. 2, it does not appear to have been part of St. Paul's system of doctrine as we gather it from his epistles.<sup>1</sup> A similar view is found in John v. 28, 29, which some commentators think to be a later addition, and in Rev. xx. 12, 13. But it does not seem to have been the characteristic view of the early Christians, and it is very likely that St. Luke has here attributed to St. Paul a view that was rather Jewish than Christian.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul continued his speech by referring to the purpose that had brought him to Jerusalem—'to bring

<sup>1</sup> Unless it is to be inferred from 1 Cor. vi. 2, xi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on v. 20.

16 Herein do I also exercise myself to have a  
conscience void of offence toward God and  
17 men alway. Now after many years I came to  
18 bring alms to my nation, and offerings : amidst  
which they found me purified in the temple,  
with no crowd, nor yet with tumult : but *there*  
19 *were* certain Jews from Asia—who ought to  
have been here before thee, and to make  
20 accusation, if they had aught against me. Or  
else let these men themselves say what wrong-  
doing they found, when I stood before the

alms to my nation and offerings.' The alms were the contributions sent by the Churches for the poor Christian Jews in Jerusalem ; the offerings were those that he offered, probably out of his own earnings, in connexion with the vow taken by the four men. What an extraordinary thing to accuse him of being untrue to Judaism at the very moment when he was not only bringing alms to Christian Jews, but making sacrificial offerings in the temple ! St. Paul proceeded to show the weakness of his adversaries' case, that they had not brought with them the Asian Jews who claimed to have witnessed his profanation of the temple. The high priest and elders who had come could only witness to what took place at the meeting of the Sanhedrin, and St. Paul asked sarcastically if they could find any wrong-doing in his statement that he stood for the resurrection of the dead. Although as Sadducees they disbelieved in the resurrection they dared not call such a belief ' wrong-doing ' for fear of

council, except it be for this one voice, that I 21  
cried standing among them, Touching the  
resurrection of the dead I am called in question  
before you this day.

But Felix, having more exact knowledge 22  
concerning the Way, deferred them, saying,  
When Lysias the chief captain shall come

the Pharisees. Some commentators think that in this sentence he was confessing to have done wrong in his statement before the Sanhedrin; but this is a misunderstanding of the situation, for even if in God's eyes he was to be blamed for what he said, yet from the point of view of Judaism no blame at all could be laid upon him for claiming to be a Pharisee.

22-27. It seems perfectly clear that, as the Jews had not produced any witnesses to support their charges, St. Paul ought to have been acquitted. But Felix had been sufficiently long in the country to know the feelings of the Jews about the Christians, and to know that the release of this prominent Christian would enrage the Jews. He therefore postponed judgment, giving as an excuse the absence of Claudius Lysias. At the same time, while desiring to propitiate the Jews, he realized that the Christian movement was to be reckoned with. He probably knew of the large treasure that St. Paul had brought from the overseas Christians, and thought that from the same source, if not from St. Paul himself, a handsome bribe for his release might be forthcoming. It was in order not too seriously to offend the Christians

- 23 down, I will determine your matter. And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence ; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him.
- 24 But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, which was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the

that he made St. Paul's imprisonment as light as possible. The arrival of Drusilla was the occasion for further interviews of Felix with St. Paul. It says in verse 24 that Felix arrived with Drusilla his own wife, and in those words we can read the scorn of the Christian writer, for this woman, Felix's third wife, had been stolen by Felix from her real husband. The mention of their arrival may mean the occasion when Felix had just enticed her and brought her to Cæsarea as his wife. She, as a Jewess, had a natural inquisitiveness to hear about Christianity, and St. Paul took the opportunity, suggested by the immorality of his distinguished hearers, of presenting the Faith as upholding a higher moral standard even than Judaism. At his preaching of judgment to come, Felix was terrified. St. Paul probably realized that preaching of hell-fire, though not the highest appeal, was the only thing that would be of any use to these hardened sinners. Our Lord Himself had at times spoken of 'outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' and John the Baptist had said, 'Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to

faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of **25** righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me. He hoped withal that money would be given **26** him of Paul wherefore also he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But **27** when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus ; and desiring to gain favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds.

come ? . . . the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.' There are people for whom such preaching is necessary. Among non-Christians a notable example is Al-Ghazzali, whose conversion to mystic Islam had been chiefly brought about through fear of the Fire.<sup>1</sup> A past generation in England used to preach hell-fire to such an extent as to hide from men the love of God. It may be that we have now gone to the other extreme of not declaring plainly the awful result of obstinate resistance to God. A missionary in Japan writes, ' I beg therefore all my younger missionary brethren to use in faith and deep conviction the terrible words of Rev. xx. 11-15 and xxi. 8. They will reach the heart ; they will convict, and the terror of the Lord will turn men back to the Lord who is ready to forgive and who delighteth to

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald, *Muslim Theology, etc.*, p. 239.

**251** Festus therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem **2** from Cæsarea. And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against **3** Paul; and they besought him, asking favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem; laying wait to kill him on the way. **4** Howbeit Festus answered, that Paul was kept in charge at Cæsarea, and that he himself was

pardon.' <sup>1</sup> There is, however, an important difference between those who have had opportunities of knowing the truth and those who have not. Felix and his Jewish wife knew something about Christianity, but they hardened their hearts against the truth. For them a stern warning was therefore necessary. But for the great multitudes who have never heard the name of Christ we cannot believe that hell-fire is prepared; and few of us now-a-days would feel it right to use in its original form the well-known missionary prayer that speaks of 'the multitudes of the heathen, who, though created in Thine image, are perishing in their ignorance.'

1-12. Felix kept St. Paul in prison, without deciding his case, for two years; but at the end of that time, owing to complaints made by the Jews, Felix was recalled in disgrace by the Emperor Nero. He was succeeded as Procurator of Judæa by Porcius Festus, a good man, whose early death prevented

<sup>1</sup> Paget Wilkes, *The Dynamic of Service*, p. 158.

about to depart *thither* shortly. Let them<sup>5</sup> therefore, saith he, which are of power among you, go down with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him.

And when he had tarried among them not<sup>6</sup> more than eight or ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and on the morrow he sat on the judgement-seat, and commanded Paul to

him from saving Judæa from the evil days into which it had fallen. Even in the short account of his dealings with St. Paul he is seen to be a very different type of man from Felix. Three days after taking up his office he went up to Jerusalem, and was there informed about St. Paul, the Jews plotting to assassinate him if they could persuade Festus to send him to Jerusalem. Whether Festus knew of their plot or not is not told, but he bluntly refused their request and arranged for a trial at Cæsarea on his return. At this trial the Jews brought many grievous charges, including, as we may gather from St. Paul's reply, offences against the Jewish Law, the temple, and Cæsar. As they did not produce any evidence to support their charges, Festus was much perplexed, probably thinking that there must be some foundation for the charges since opinion seemed so unanimously set against the prisoner. He probably saw that there was no truth in the charge of high treason, offending against Cæsar, but at the same time he desired if possible to placate the people. He therefore suggested that a trial should take place before the sanhedrin,



7 be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which had come down from Jerusalem stood round about him, bringing against him many and grievous charges, which they could not 8 prove; while Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar, have I sinned at

himself intending to be present in order to confirm their verdict if St. Paul was proved to have offended against Jewish Law. St. Paul knew well that the sanhedrin would condemn him, and that the presence of Festus, who knew nothing of Judaism, would be no real safeguard. Now, however much Festus may have wished to satisfy the peculiar scruples of the Jews, he could not compel St. Paul to submit to their Jewish judgment and therefore had to ask St. Paul whether he was willing to be judged by the sanhedrin. This proposal St. Paul firmly refused, reminding the Procurator that the trial just held had shown that he was guilty of no offence against the Jews of which Roman Law could take cognizance. Standing before Festus he was being tried by Roman Law, 'before Cæsar's judgment seat' as he described it, and he would not agree to be taken away from the protection of that Law and be made a present of to fanatical Jews. His experience under Felix had wearied him, making him despair of justice in a place where Jewish fear or favour might influence the law courts. Probably during his two years' imprisonment he had weighed carefully the step which he was now about to

all. But Festus, desiring to gain favour with 9 the Jews, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? But Paul said, I am 10 standing before Cæsar's judgement-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If 11 then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if none of those things is *true*, whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto

take. Why should he, a Christian, have his actions judged by a Law which he no longer believed binding? In the matter of civil wrong, the civil power, vested by the Roman people in the Emperor, must decide. In the matter of spiritual wrong, Moses and the Law, the High Priest and the sanhedrin, had been superseded by the new Law-giver, Jesus Christ. Such were the arguments that must have passed through his mind; and he may also have been influenced by what he had heard in the vision, 'Thou must bear witness also at Rome.' Two words only were necessary, and having in his Greek speech vindicated his right to be tried by Roman Law, he uttered those two words in Latin, 'I appeal to Cæsar.' St. Luke says nothing of the disappointed rage of the Jewish accusers as they saw their enemy escape thus out of their power. One wonders whether any of those present remembered that other Jewish appeal to the Emperor, 'We

12 them. I appeal unto Cæsar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Thou hast appealed unto Cæsar : unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

13 Now when certain days were passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Cæsarea, 14 and saluted Festus. And as they tarried there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a certain man left a

have no king but Cæsar,' and reflected how the power which had been invoked to bring the leader to the cross was now invoked to protect His apostle. For Festus himself St. Paul's appeal must have come as an unpleasant shock. It was the first case he had tried in Judæa, and before he had even pronounced judgment, the prisoner had appealed against him not trusting his impartiality. A short discussion with his council, consisting of legal advisers and other officials, satisfied him that the appeal must be granted ; and it only remained to make arrangements for the prisoner to be conveyed in safe custody to Rome.

13-27. After having agreed to send St. Paul to Rome Festus found himself in an exceedingly difficult position. At the trial which had taken place before him there had been many assertions of wrong doing, but no evidence such as could be accepted in a court of law. If for further information he looked up the files of his predecessor Felix, he must have found that Felix, after hearing the evidence, did not condemn St. Paul to death or imprisonment. It was perfectly

prisoner by Felix : about whom, when I was at 15  
Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of  
the Jews informed *me*, asking for sentence  
against him. To whom I answered, that it is 16  
not the custom of the Romans to give up any  
man, before that the accused have the accusers  
face to face, and have had opportunity to make  
his defence concerning the matter laid against  
him. When therefore they were come together 17  
here, I made no delay, but on the next day sat  
down on the judgement-seat, and commanded

clear that St. Paul ought to have been released in the first place by Claudius Lysias ; failing that, he ought to have been released by Felix ; and now Festus found himself in the position of having to send a prisoner to Rome against whom he knew of no definite charge. Such difficulties must have arisen continually when the Roman rulers tried to make allowances for Jewish scruples which they did not understand. However, a favourable opportunity soon arose to help him out of his difficulty. For Herod Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I, paid a visit to Cæsarea. Agrippa II ruled with the title of king over the districts on the north-east of the Holy Land, from Anti-Libanus and the borders of Damascus to Jebel Hauran. Like the rest of the Herod family he was Jewish by profession, without taking the religion very seriously ; for it will be remembered that they were not Jews by blood, but of Edomite origin. His

- 18 the man to be brought. Concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed ;  
19 but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus, who was dead,  
20 whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.  
21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to

relations with his profligate sister Bernice were such as shocked not only Jewish but even Greek society. To this man then Festus appealed, as one who would understand the curious notions of the Jews, but yet would not be much biassed in their favour. Agrippa was pleased with the opportunity of hearing St. Paul speak, and indeed had hoped that he might get such an opportunity while he was in Cæsarea, 'I myself also was wishing to hear the man' (verse 22). A meeting was arranged for the following day. It is clear from several considerations that this meeting was not of a legal nature. There could not have been any further trial before the Procurator after St. Paul's appeal to Cæsar ; the Procurator, though present, was not presiding, which of course he would have done in any legal proceeding ; there was no accusation laid against St. Paul. It seems perfectly clear that the meeting was arranged as an entertainment for Agrippa

be kept till I should send him to Cæsar. And **22**  
Agrippa *said* unto Festus, I also could wish  
to hear the man myself. To-morrow, saith he,  
thou shalt hear him.

So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, **23**  
and Bernice, with great pomp, and they were  
entered into the place of hearing, with the  
chief captains, and the principal men of the  
city, at the command of Festus Paul was  
brought in. And Festus saith, King Agrippa, **24**  
and all men which are here present with us, ye  
behold this man, about whom all the multitude  
of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusalem  
and here, crying that he ought not to live any

and Bernice, and was attended as such by all the  
nobility of the place. Festus was very glad to be able  
to arrange this gathering because by conferring  
afterwards with Agrippa and others well-acquainted  
with Judaism he hoped to get some clear idea of the  
questions at issue between St. Paul and the Jews, and  
so to be able to send a more reasonable report to  
Rome. But at the same time he was glad to arrange  
a *tamasha* in honour of Agrippa, as a courteous  
recognition of the compliment paid him by Agrippa's  
visit to salute him on his arrival. St. Luke describes  
the scene as an eye-witness: the procession of  
notables in gorgeous apparel into the auditorium,  
with great pomp and show, the command of Festus to  
fetch the prisoner, and then the entry of a man,

25 longer. But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death: and as he himself appealed to the emperor I determined to send  
26 him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, king Agrippa, that, after examination  
27 had, I may have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not withal to signify the charges against him.

physically nothing to look at, wearing the chain that marked him as a malefactor, Paul. The word 'Paul' comes as the last word of the sentence (verse 23), a climax and a contrast to the brilliant company. One feels that St. Luke knew that when the names of most of that company were forgotten, when the historian passed over in a few lines the life-story of Festus and Agrippa, when people had even ceased to trouble about the shocking behaviour of Bernice, the name of Paul would be revered as one of the greatest men in human history. For St. Paul the gathering was far more than a mere show, nor was it part of his trial. The R.V. makes him say (xxvi. 6) 'And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.' But the word 'here' is not in the original. That company was not to judge him. He had appealed for the verdict of the whole civilized world, as represented in the person of the Emperor. The company before whom he stood, so



And Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art **261**  
permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul  
stretched forth his hand, and made his defence :

I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I **2**  
am to make my defence before thee this day  
touching all the things whereof I am accused  
by the Jews : especially because thou art **3**  
expert in all customs and questions which are  
among the Jews : wherefore I beseech thee to  
hear me patiently. My manner of life then **4**  
from my youth up, which was from the begin-  
ning among mine own nation, and at Jeru-  
salem, know all the Jews ; having knowledge **5**  
of me from the first, if they be willing to  
testify, how that after the straitest sect of our

far from being his judges, were being judged by the words of the faith which he was declaring to them. It is necessary to understand the true nature of the gathering, and St. Paul's attitude towards it, if we are to understand his speech in the following chapter.

1-32. St. Luke has recorded for us in graphic summary one of the finest speeches of St. Paul. At first reading the speech seems all about himself—I, I, I—but on looking closer into it we see how his own fortunes are left in the background. It is true that he was standing under judgment (verse 6), but a judgment to be pronounced in far-off Rome ; it is true that he was being accused, but accused by Jews of believing in the Jewish Messiah. The charges

6 religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand  
*here* to be judged for the hope of the promise  
7 made of God unto our fathers ; unto which  
*promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving  
*God* night and day, hope to attain. And  
concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews,  
8 O king ! Why is it judged incredible with you,  
9 if God doth raise the dead ? I verily thought  
with myself, that I ought to do many things  
contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

were so ridiculous that the idea that St. Paul was being tried by this grandiose assembly passed away into the mists of unreality, and St. Paul found himself facing the audience as men and women with souls waiting to be saved ; he found himself declaring to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, not to refute accusations against himself, but to bring his hearers to light and salvation (verses, 22, 23). He began his speech by congratulating himself that it was before a man well-acquainted with Judaism that he was to make defence, not merely a defence against some rather foolish charges of the Jews, but a defence of his whole life and of the gospel that he proclaimed. As a youth he had been a strict Jew, a member of the very strict sect of the Pharisees. From that strict following of the Jewish faith he had never been converted. The Jews looked forward earnestly to the coming of the Messiah prophesied in the pages of the Old Testament ; St. Paul showed himself most Jewish of the Jews by believing that these prophecies were

And this I also did in Jerusalem : and I both 10  
shut up many of the saints in prisons, having  
received authority from the chief priests, and  
when they were put to death, I gave my vote  
against them. And punishing them oftentimes 11  
in all the synagogues, I strove to make them  
blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against  
them, I persecuted them even unto foreign  
cities. Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus 12  
with the authority and commission of the chief

fulfilled ; and for this Jewish faith he was accused by  
Jews. In verse 8 he suddenly turns from Agrippa,  
and facing the assembly, challenged them whether a  
resurrection of the dead was incredible. Most prob-  
ably he remembered that before his own conversion  
the story of the resurrection of Jesus had called forth  
his own sneers, and now he felt that his hearers were  
in the same position as he was before his conversion.  
So he described to them that old self of his, the  
persecutor of the Christians, and he knew that the  
description fitted them. For this reason he gave his  
experiences in a generalized form : it is unlikely that  
other Christians besides St. Stephen were put to  
death in those days, and also unlikely that the young  
man Saul was a member of the sanhedrin so as  
literally to have a vote (verse 10), but he was thinking  
of his own participation in St. Stephen's martyrdom as  
part of the persecution which the Jewish leaders were  
still carrying on. His description of his conversion,

13 priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way  
a light from heaven, above the brightness of  
the sun, shining round about me and them that  
14 journeyed with me. And when we were all  
fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto  
me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why  
persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick  
15 against the goad. And I said, Who art thou,  
Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom

while following the general lines of the previous accounts, seems to have been treated in the same rather free way. For instance he includes the call to work among the Gentiles, which he probably first received in the vision at Jerusalem (xxii. 21), and he includes the Greek and Latin proverbial saying about an ox kicking against the goad that guides it as expressing the Lord's rebuke for his resistance to the truth. There seems to be a certain amount of exaggeration in saying that he preached 'throughout all the country of Judæa.' Some preaching in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem is mentioned in ix. 28, but we have seen reason to doubt whether the text of that verse is what St. Luke wrote. Rom. xv. 19 probably implies some work round about Jerusalem. The exact sphere of his work is however unimportant. It remains true that he had preached repentance both to Jews and Gentiles. Again he brought in a paradox that, for preaching repentance and turning to God, the Jews had tried to kill him. But with God's help he continued preaching to men of every type, from slaves

thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon **16**  
thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto  
thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness  
both of the things wherein thou hast seen me,  
and of the things wherein I will appear unto  
thee; delivering thee from the people, and **17**  
from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to **18**  
open their eyes, that they may turn from dark-  
ness to light, and from the power of Satan unto  
God, that they may receive remission of sins  
and an inheritance among them that are  
sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king **19**  
Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the

to rulers, and at that very moment was preaching to  
a Procurator, a king, and an array of nobles. Yet all  
his preaching of the suffering of the Messiah, and  
about the Messiah, the first-fruits of the resurrection,  
bringing light to lighten Jews and Gentiles, strange  
as it sounded to Jewish ears, was founded on the  
scriptures of the Jews. All the while he had been  
speaking Festus had been listening, unable to follow  
the drift of his argument. Recognizing him as a man  
of learning he could only suppose that references to  
resurrection were the marks of a disordered brain;  
and with such sentiments he interrupted the speech.  
St. Paul answered courteously that he was by no  
means talking wildly, for all the things concerning  
Jesus were well known. He turned to Agrippa to  
corroborate what he was saying, and to bear witness

- 20 heavenly vision : but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judæa, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to  
21 God, doing works worthy of repentance. For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple,  
22 and assayed to kill me. Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and  
23 Moses did say should come ; how that the Christ must suffer, *and* how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.

that the Old Testament Prophets actually prophesied the things of which he spoke. To the challenge whether he believed the Prophets Agrippa gave no answer. He was amused that St. Paul should call upon him to bear witness to the truth of Christianity before Festus, and replied, ' With a little effort thou art persuading me to make a Christian,' i.e., ' to play the part of an evangelist to try and convert Festus.' St. Paul by this time had quite ceased to think of his audience as anything else but souls to be won for Christ. He took Agrippa at his word and answered, ' I would to God, that whether with little effort or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am (i.e. preachers of the Gospel of salvation) except these bonds.' He had

And as he thus made his defence, Festus<sup>24</sup> saith with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning doth turn thee to madness. But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent<sup>25</sup> Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these<sup>26</sup> things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the<sup>27</sup> prophets? I know that thou believest. And<sup>28</sup> Agrippa *said* unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian.

in mind no doubt the words of Moses, 'Would God all the Lord's people were prophets!' The conception that people were called not only to be converts to Christianity, but also to be missionaries of the Faith, was soon forgotten; and consequently this passage was soon misunderstood. The idea that Agrippa and all that company were called upon to be preachers of Christianity was too grotesque, and it was thought that all St. Paul could have hoped was that they might become Christians. So the later manuscripts altered Agrippa's remark so as to make him say, 'With a little effort thou art persuading me to become a Christian.' That was the text which lay before the translators of the A.V. The translators of the R.V., and all modern commentators, have had before them the true text, 'With a little (effort) thou persuadest



- 29 And Paul *said*, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.
- 30 And the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:
- 31 and when they had withdrawn, they spake one to another, saying, This man doeth nothing
- 32 worthy of death or of bonds. And Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

me to make a Christian,' but influenced by the sense given by the later manuscripts, they have all tried in one way or another to force the translation into agreement with it. Thus the R.V. gives, 'With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian.' But the Greek will not bear that sense. The translation adopted here not only follows literally what is written in the Greek, but also agrees with the context that St. Paul was appealing to Agrippa to witness to the truth of the Old Testament so as to convince Festus of the reasonableness of Christianity. At the conclusion of the meeting Agrippa, Bernice and the Procurator agreed that St. Paul was guilty of no crime punishable by death or imprisonment, and Agrippa's opinion was that, apart from his appeal to Cæsar, he might have been set free. These were not judicial opinions, but merely the opinions of

And when it was determined that we should<sup>271</sup> sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band. And embarking in a<sup>2</sup> ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail unto the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we<sup>3</sup> touched at Sidon: and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends and refresh himself. And putting to<sup>4</sup> sea from thence, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

individuals who had been present at the meeting. It was not a legal trial, and nothing that was said by the audience could interfere with the course of his trial before Cæsar. We may however be sure that the result of this meeting was that Festus sent a report to Cæsar very favourable to St. Paul.

xxvii. St. Luke in this chapter gives us a wealth of detail which is surprising. Other voyages and even shipwrecks of St. Paul he has passed by in silence; and this account is said even to stand out preeminently in comparison with other accounts of shipwrecks in the ancient world. The reason is not only St. Luke's delight as a literary genius in describing the most exciting adventure in which he himself had taken part, but also his desire to show how in the time of danger his Christian hero, St. Paul, although occupying the

5 And when we had sailed across the sea which  
is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra,  
6 *a city* of Lycia. And there the centurion found  
a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy ; and he  
7 put us therein. And when we had sailed  
slowly many days, and were come with diffi-  
culty over against Cnidus, the wind not further  
suffering us, we sailed under the lee of Crete,  
8 over against Salmone ; and with difficulty  
coasting along it we came unto a certain place  
called Fair Havens ; nigh whereunto was the  
city of Lasea.

position of a prisoner, appeared as the natural leader. The natural leadership of the Christian was emblematical of the part to be played by Christianity in a troubled world. From verses 1 and 2, we conclude that Luke and Aristarchus accompanied St. Paul. Possibly 'we' may also include Titus. These companions may have embarked independently on the ship as ordinary passengers, for the ship was not an imperial vessel, but one engaged in ordinary trade. As however it says in verse 6 that the centurion put 'us' into another ship at Myra it seems as if St. Paul's companions were also under the directions of the centurion. They may have been prisoners as well, especially as Aristarchus is described by St. Paul later as a fellow-prisoner (Col. iv. 10), or they may all have dressed as slaves and have accompanied St. Paul in that capacity. The name 'Augustan

And when much time was spent, and the 9  
voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast  
was now already gone by, Paul admonished  
them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that 10  
the voyage will be with injury and much loss,  
not only of the lading and the ship, but also of  
our lives. But the centurion gave more heed 11  
to the master and to the owner of the ship,  
than to those things which were spoken by

Band' is not known as a technical title, and it is supposed that Julius was one of the officers on overseas service who acted as means of communication between the Emperor and his armies in the Provinces. This suggestion is borne out by the title of the officer in Rome to whom Julius handed over his prisoners. For in xxviii. 16 the Bezan text adds, 'the centurion delivered the prisoners to the stratopedarch,' and this title 'stratopedarch' has been plausibly explained as the chief of such liaison officers. The ship in which the prisoners were first embarked was a coasting vessel belonging to Adramyttium, a town in Mysia; and it is probable that the centurion's first intention was to take his prisoners as far as Adramyttium, then by land across the little peninsular to Troas. and from thence to Macedonia by sea. He would cross Macedonia by the Via Egnatia, one of the famous Roman roads, and then have only a short crossing over the Adriatic Sea to Italy. But on reaching Myra he found a corn ship which had come from Alexandria, and had made a favourable run to the southern coast

- 12 Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to put to sea from thence, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, and winter *there*; *which* is a haven of Crete, looking north-east and  
13 south-east. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along  
14 Crete, close in shore. But after no long time there beat down from it a tempestuous wind,  
15 which is called Euraquilo: and when the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, we

of Asia Minor, and from there was to make the voyage to Rome. Although it was late in the season it was still possible for the ship to make this voyage from Myra to Italy. When however they got as far as Cnidus, the south-western extremity of Asia Minor, the westerly wind prevented them from pursuing the direct western course that they had intended, and they were obliged to sail in a more southerly direction towards the island of Crete. Coming to the eastern side of Crete, they were protected from the strong westerly wind—which is the meaning of the expression ‘under the lee of Crete’—and by hugging the southern shore of the island were able to creep along slowly till they came to a harbour called Fair Havens. So long time had become spent on this slow travelling that the season of dangerous storms was setting in, and they would soon be in the winter months when

gave way *to it*, and were driven. And running 16  
under the lee of a small island called Cauda,  
we were able, with difficulty, to secure the  
boat: and when they had hoisted it up, they 17  
used helps, undergirding the ship; and,  
fearing lest they should be cast upon the  
Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and so were  
driven. And as we laboured exceedingly with 18  
the storm, the next day they began to throw  
*the freight* overboard; and the third day they 19  
cast out with their own hands the tackling of  
the ship. And when neither sun nor stars 20  
shone upon *us* for many days, and no small  
tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be

navigation altogether ceased. St. Luke remembered the date as being after the great Jewish fast of the Day of Atonement, which falls in the latter half of September or early October. No hope was now entertained of continuing the voyage to Rome, but it was thought possible to continue coasting along Crete till they reached a better harbour known as Phoenix. The corn supply of Rome was an imperial concern, and therefore the final decision of the movements of this ship rested with the centurion. He called a council to discuss the situation. St. Paul, as a much travelled man, was allowed to express his opinion, but the centurion naturally paid more heed to the helmsman and the captain. R.V. is incorrect in calling these two men 'the master and the owner,' for the

21 saved was now taken away. And when they had been long without food, then Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have set sail from Crete, and have gotten this injury 22 and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life 23 among you, but *only* of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God 24 whose I am, whom also I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar: and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail

ship would not have been in private ownership. The relation between these two is expressed by Plutarch who tells us that 'the helmsman chooses the crew, and the captain chooses the helmsman.'<sup>1</sup> St. Luke's description of Phœnix as a harbour facing SW and NW is incorrect, and has caused much trouble to commentators, the R.V. boldly altering it to NE and SE. St. Luke never saw the harbour, and was probably misled by being told that if they had been in that harbour they would have been protected from the dreadful NE typhoon which soon came upon them. The difficulty of reaching Phœnix was that they had to skirt a cape called Cape Matala, and in so doing might be driven out to sea. That is exactly what happened; for though they started with a gentle

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Preuschen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, p. 150.



with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer : 25  
for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it  
hath been spoken unto me. Howbeit we must 26  
be cast upon a certain island.

But when the fourteenth night was come, as 27  
we were driven to and fro in the *sea of* Adria,  
about midnight the sailors surmised that they  
were drawing near to some country ; and they 28  
sounded, and found twenty fathoms : and after  
a little space, they sounded again, and found  
fifteen fathoms. And fearing lest haply we 29  
should be cast ashore on rocky ground, they  
let go four anchors from the stern, and wished

south breeze, which they thought would keep them in  
to shore, a sudden gale blew down upon them from  
the mountains of Crete, mountains as high as Darjee-  
ling or Simla. The gale, blowing from the NE, drove  
the ship in a south-westerly direction. So suddenly  
did it come on that the sailors were helpless. A  
little respite was given when the ship was driven close  
to a small island named Cauda, for turning westwards  
under its south side they found partial protection for  
a short time from the violence of the storm. During  
that respite they were able to perform three necessary  
operations—hauling up the small boat which was being  
towed behind, undergirding the ship by throwing a  
cable over the prow of the ship and drawing both  
ends taut so as to bind the ship transversely amid-  
ships, and lowering the mainsail. The last mentioned

**30** for the day. And as the sailors were seeking to flee out of the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, under colour as though they **31** would lay out anchors from the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be **32** saved. Then the soldiers cut away the ropes **33** of the boat, and let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take some food, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye wait and continue

of these operations, as being the most important, was probably performed first. If the ship had been allowed to go with the wind it would have been driven straight on to the dreaded quicksands off the north coast of Africa, called Syrtis Major. But by the use of the rudders, and possibly a small sail, they were able to turn her head so that she drifted slightly north of west. In this way, however, the waves would break almost broadside on to the ship, and it must have been an hourly question how long the creaking timbers could withstand the onslaught. Efforts were made to lighten the ship by casting overboard, first part of the cargo of grain, and then the ship's furniture. Then, at a time when every one had lost heart, and no one dared speak of the possibility of being saved alive; when preoccupation with the labour of tending the ship, and the difficulty of prepar-

fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I **34**  
beseech you to take some food : for this is for  
your safety : for there shall not a hair perish  
from the head of any of you. And when he **35**  
had said this, and had taken bread, he gave  
thanks to God in the presence of all : and he  
brake it, and began to eat. Then were they **36**  
all of good cheer, and themselves also took  
food. And we were in all in the ship two **37**  
hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And **38**  
when they had eaten enough, they lightened  
the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

ing palatable food for the sea-sick crew, had brought them to the verge of starvation ; Paul the prisoner arose and revived their courage by relating a vision of the night in which an angel of God had assured him that all lives would be saved. Fourteen days thus passed, the ship being driven to and fro in the sea of Adria, i.e., that part of the Mediterranean Sea which is south of what is now known as the Adriatic Sea. Most modern commentators think that St. Luke was mistaken in supposing that the ship was driven backwards and forwards, and that in reality it followed a straight course WNW. On the fourteenth night the trained ears of the sailors heard the sound of waves breaking on land. Soundings were taken, and they found they were in shallow water rapidly becoming shallower. Usually anchors are thrown from the

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land :  
but they perceived a certain bay with a beach,  
and they took counsel whether they could  
40 drive the ship upon it. And casting off the  
anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same  
time loosing the bands of the rudders ; and  
hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made  
41 for the beach. But lighting upon a place  
where two seas met, they ran the vessel  
aground ; and the foreship struck and remain-  
ed unmoveable, but the stern began to break

prow of a ship, but in this case, as they did not expect to save the ship or the anchors, they threw out anchors from the stern, thus leaving the prow of the ship pointing to the land. During the night the sailors thought of deserting the ship, and pretended that they were going to carry out anchors in the boat and drop them ahead of the ship. But their plan was frustrated by the watchful eye of St. Paul. And then in that dark night, which seemed as if it would never end, the Christian apostle stood out as the one individual whose courage had not failed. His words of calm assurance impressed them, and when his voice was raised in thanksgiving to God for daily bread, and he broke and ate some of the hard ship's biscuit, his spirit of courage was caught by the rest and following his example they took food. Then they lightened the ship still further by casting overboard

up by the violence *of the waves*. And the 42 soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any *of them* should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, 43 stayed them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves overboard, and get first to the land: and the rest, some on planks, and some 44 on *other* things from the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safe to the land.

the remainder of the cargo. As day dawned they saw a bay, and determined to try and drive the ship on to the beach. Letting loose the anchor ropes, and unfastening the two great oars which served in ancient boats as rudders, and which had been tied up the night before, they let the ship drive forwards. But it grounded on a sand-bank, on which the waves beat on either side; and the stern, which had not grounded, was quickly battered to pieces by the waves. The soldiers, knowing that they were responsible with their lives if the prisoners escaped, wished to kill them all. But the centurion would not allow the hero, whose encouragement had saved all their lives, to be killed, and ordered everyone to make for the shore. Those who could swim dived first from the ship. The remainder waited till the ship broke up, and then escaped on the wreckage. Not a single life was lost.

**281** And when we were escaped, then we knew  
2 that the island was called Melita. And the  
barbarians shewed us no common kindness :  
for they kindled a fire, and received us all,  
because of the present rain, and because of the  
3 cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle  
of sticks, and laid them on the fire, a viper  
came out by reason of the heat, and fastened  
4 on his hand. And when the barbarians saw  
the beast hanging from his hand, they said one  
to another, No doubt this man is a murderer,  
whom, though he hath escaped from the sea,

1-10. The two hundred and seventy-six shipwrecked men found an unexpected welcome on the island. For the natives of Malta, or Melita as it was called then, though ignorant of the Greek language and culture—as the epithet ‘barbarians’ implies—were extremely kindhearted. Fires were soon kindled, and it was while St. Paul was tending one of these fires that an incident occurred which greatly impressed the natives. A snake, which they, at any rate, supposed to be poisonous, fastened on his hand, and yet he came to no harm. At first, seeing perhaps a chain still on his wrist, they knew he was a prisoner, and they thought that Justice, a virtue personified as a deity, was about to take vengeance on him for his crime. But seeing him come to no harm they changed their minds and thought he was a god. In this incident, if the snake was really poisonous, we may see a fulfilment of the Lord’s promise recorded in the appendix

yet Justice hath not suffered to live. Howbeit 5  
he shook off the beast into the fire, and took  
no harm. But they expected that he would 6  
have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly :  
but when they were long in expectation, and  
beheld nothing amiss come to him, they  
changed their minds, and said that he was  
a god.

Now in the neighbourhood of that place 7  
were lands belonging to the chief man of the  
island, named Publius ; who received us, and  
entertained us three days courteously. And it 8  
was so, that the father of Publius lay sick of  
fever and dysentery : unto whom Paul entered  
in, and prayed, and laying his hands on him

to St. Mark's gospel (Mark xvi. 18). Such immunity  
has not often been granted to Christians, and as the  
words do not form part of St. Mark's original gospel  
we may be allowed to doubt whether our Lord really  
made such a promise. It may, however, be a gift  
which we have missed like that of faith-healing,  
through lack of faith. Sadhu Sundar Singh mentions  
an occasion when he slept by a leopard, and says that  
wild beasts have never harmed him.<sup>1</sup> Not only the  
ordinary folk of the island, but the first man Publius  
also treated the ship-wrecked party hospitably. Once  
more St. Luke's accuracy comes out, for the title

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Parker, *Sadhu Sundar Singh*, p. 46.



- 9 healed him. And when this was done, the rest also which had diseases in the island came,  
10 and were cured: who also honoured us with many honours; and when we sailed, they put on board such things as we needed.
- 11 And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, whose sign was The Twin Brothers.
- 12 And touching at Syracuse, we tarried there

'first man' appears on coins as the title of the ruler of Malta. St. Paul had an opportunity of repaying this kindness by healing the father of Publius by the laying on of hands. Others who were sick in the island then came for treatment. The word translated 'were cured' in verse 9 is properly 'received medical treatment', from which we gather that, in addition to the faith-healing by St. Paul, St. Luke practised the medical art, and this conjecture is borne out by the statement that they honoured 'us', that is, St. Paul's companions as well as himself.

11-16. The centurion soon learnt that a corn-ship on its way from Alexandria to Rome was wintering in the island. So he arranged to take his party on board. The weather was favourable, and a start was made about February. At Syracuse in Sicily a three days' delay was necessary while they hoped for a south wind to take them to Rhegium in Italy. The wind was not altogether favourable, but by means of tacking they were able to reach their port. After one day's rest at Rhegium they got the south wind they

three days. And from thence we made a <sup>13</sup> circuit, and arrived at Rhegium: and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the

desired, and made a quick run to Puteoli. There they disembarked, and there was a delay of seven days, perhaps due to difficulty in arranging for the land journey. Puteoli was an important port, and it was not therefore surprising to find some Christians there. St. Paul was allowed by the centurion to accept their hospitality. After St. Luke in verse 14 had recorded the arrival in Rome he remembered an incident that was worthy of being recorded, namely, that news of St. Paul's arrival in Italy had reached the Christians in Rome, some of whom hastened to meet him. Some were able to get as far as the place called Three Taverns, thirty miles from Rome, and some ten miles further to the Market of Appius. This welcome from the Christian community of Rome greatly cheered St. Paul. On arrival in Rome the centurion handed over the prisoners to his chief.<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, as a distinguished prisoner, was not put with the others. Later on, verse 30, we read that he lived in his own hired house; but it is likely that he was at first placed in a separate room in the camp.

**The Epistles of the Captivity.** It was probably during his imprisonment in Rome that St. Paul wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Philippians. They bear evident marks of having been written during a time of

<sup>1</sup> See the note on chapter xxvii, p. 397.

- 14 second day we came to Puteoli: where we found brethren, and were intreated to tarry with them seven days: and so we came to  
15 Rome. And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius, and The Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

imprisonment, and though it is possible that they were written from Cæsarea the majority of scholars are inclined to date them from Rome. We have seen in the Introduction that the very people were present when he wrote Colossians who could have given St. Luke the information required for Acts. Acts could not have been completed in Cæsarea, and thus the probability that Acts was written in Rome adds another argument to those usually put forward for the Roman origin of Colossians. When St. Paul wrote Colossians he had with him Timothy, Luke, Tychicus, Demas, Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus and Jesus Justus. Of these we know that Luke and Aristarchus accompanied him on his voyage. Timothy and Tychicus had been of the company that went with him to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor saints (xx. 4). They must therefore have followed St. Paul to Rome, probably going overland while he went by sea. Epaphras or Epaphroditus was sent to Rome by the Christians of Philippi with a gift for St. Paul (Phil. iv. 18). We do not know when Demas, Mark and Jesus Justus came to Rome,

And when we entered into Rome, Paul was 16  
suffered to abide by himself with the soldier  
that guarded him.

And it came to pass, that after three days 17  
he called together those that were the chief of  
the Jews : and when they were come together,  
he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had  
done nothing against the people, or the cus-  
toms of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner  
from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans :

or whether they came there for the purpose of joining  
St. Paul. Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon bear  
marks of having been written at the same time.  
Colossae was a town in Asia. St. Paul may have  
visited it during his stay in Ephesus, or at any rate  
have got into touch with the Christians there.  
Ephesians was a circular letter sent round to various  
Churches of Asia. Some copies of the epistle leave  
a blank space instead of the name Ephesus (i. 1) so  
that the reader of the epistle could insert the name of  
the town where he was reading it. As Archippus is  
addressed in Philemon 2, and saluted in Col. iv. 17,  
it seems probable that Philemon lived at Colossae.  
The epistle to the Philippians stands somewhat apart  
from the other three, and was written at a time when  
St. Paul was seriously in doubt as to the verdict that  
would be given in his trial. It may have been written  
later than the other three when the issue of the trial  
was imminent.

17-31. As in other places St. Paul made a point of

18 who, when they had examined me, desired to  
set me at liberty, because there was no cause  
19 of death in me. But when the Jews spake  
against it, I was constrained to appeal unto  
Cæsar; not that I had aught to accuse my  
20 nation of. For this cause therefore did I  
intreat you to see and to speak with *me*: for  
because of the hope of Israel I am bound with  
21 this chain. And they said unto him, We  
neither received letters from Judæa concerning  
thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither  
22 and report or speak any harm of thee. But we  
desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for  
as concerning this sect, it is known to us that  
everywhere it is spoken against.

first speaking to the Jews, and being unable to go to them he invited the leaders to come to him. If St. Luke had not already given us a full account of the arrest and trials of St. Paul, we should have got a somewhat erroneous view of the events from St. Paul's speech as here recorded. But the speech would of course have been much longer, and St. Luke in compressing it into three and a half verses was aware that his readers would understand. The only fresh point in the speech is the fact that St. Paul felt it necessary to explain why he had appealed to Cæsar, because he might easily have been suspected of the intention of bringing counter-charges against the Jews. It was, he said, chiefly to guard against any

And when they had appointed him a day, **23** they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded *the matter*, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things **24** which were spoken, and some disbelieved. And when they agreed not among themselves, **25** they departed, after that Paul had spoken one

such misconception that he had asked the leading Jews to meet him. He repeated what he had said in Jerusalem and Cæsarea that he was on trial for believing in the fulfilment of the hopes of the Old Testament. This speech for the moment disarmed the criticism of the Jewish leaders. They had, it is true, heard a good deal about Christianity, for there were Christians in their midst, and the general opinion formed in Jewish circles was that Christianity was an heretical sect. But they were willing for the moment to give St. Paul a fair hearing; for the reverence which he evinced for the Law and the Prophets bespoke a very different attitude from the anti-Jewish polemic attributed to St. Paul by common report. They therefore received him politely, emphasizing the fact that they had had no official communication about him from Jerusalem, nor any formal statement of the charges laid against him. If the tumults about Chrestus, which had led to severe measures against the Jews in Rome, were really

- word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah  
26 the prophet unto your fathers, saying,  
    Go thou unto this people, and say,  
    By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no  
    wise understand ;  
    And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no  
    wise perceive :  
27 For this people's heart is waxed gross,  
    And their ears are dull of hearing,  
    And their eyes they have closed ;  
    Lest haply they should perceive with their  
    eyes,  
    And hear with their ears,  
    And understand with their heart,  
    And should turn again,  
    And I should heal them.

anti-Christian riots, we can well understand their desire not to risk further repressive measures by stirring up feeling again on the same question. They no doubt hoped that it would be possible to allow Christianity to continue to exist within the pale of Judaism as a Jewish sect. St. Paul, however, saw that such a compromise would be the death of Christianity, and when a few days later a larger number of Jews came to him, he spoke out boldly about the kingdom of God and Jesus as the Messianic king foretold in the Law and the Prophets. In the words of Isaiah he told them of the awful consequences of rejecting the heavenly message. He was not satisfied with the



Be it known therefore unto you, that this **28** salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear.

And he abode two whole years in his own **30** hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and **31** teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him.

tendency among them of some professing belief and others disbelief in the new doctrines, for that savoured too much of the divided opinions about the ordinary rabbinical schools. Christianity must either be accepted as the one and only fulfilment of the Jewish hopes, or must be rejected. If the Jews adopted the latter attitude and rejected Christianity, they could not stay its progress, for the Gentile world was ready to accept it, and the Jews would only find that they had rejected the religion of their forefathers. Thus St. Luke ends his story. Although he has led on his readers step by step to follow the fortunes of St. Paul, till they were eagerly waiting to read the result of the trial, St. Luke ends with these masterly lines by showing that after all St. Paul was only the agent of a great movement, the working out in history of the ideal of the kingdom of God. And now, what did it matter whether St. Paul lived or died? The kingdom of God was preached boldly in the metropolis of Empire, and Jesus Christ was proclaimed as Lord, without let or hindrance.

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